

# Questioning the Authority of the Past

The Ahl al-Qur'an Movements in the Punjab



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ALI USMAN QASMI

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Ali,  
Lahore.



# 1

## Introduction

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, a noted scholar of religious sciences with a focus on the study of Islam, once anecdotally compared the dilemma of present-day Muslims with a driver looking for vacant space in a parking lot and confronted with a 'No Parking' sign. He stated that a diligent driver would strictly follow the sign and abstain from parking his vehicle illegally. A less diligent one, though giving full regard to the dictate of the sign, would still park his car but not without remorse. Those who believe that disregarding the sign would not be too gross a breach of conduct would park the car and hope to get away with it without any repercussions. There would also be those who would consider the sign itself to be dubious and a practical prank by those simply mocking outsiders to their neighbourhood.<sup>1</sup> It can be inferred from Smith's analogy that he considers the sign to be signifying a normative standard of excellence enjoined upon the Muslims to which they are ideally required to adhere. There are some who follow it at all times and there are others who try to do so most of the time and in most aspects of their lives. There are others who do not regard it as incorrect but still are more relaxed in following it diligently. Those who disregard the sign itself as dubious and inauthentic, or simply unnecessary, can be taken as a reference to those who do not believe in religion or are agnostic.

This last category, however, should have one more entry: there are some among the Muslims who are as staunch in their beliefs as, may be, the diligent ones, with the difference that the former do not give regard to all the religious instructions simply because they have been there for a very long time or have been unreservedly accepted by others as authentic. They only submit to those which they consider 'truly genuine' and 'divinely ordained'. This group of Muslims one can refer to as the *Ahl al-Qur'an* and it is with the study of their history and beliefs that the present study is concerned.

Ahl al-Qur'an (People of the Quran) refers to a disparate set of movements and ideologies—dating from late nineteenth century onwards in South Asia—associated with those who uphold the Quran as the only sacred text which Muslims need to follow in matters of their beliefs and practices. All other 'signs' (not in a Derridean sense but the one cited above from the writings of Smith) or non-Quranic material, particularly, in the form of Hadith along with classical Quranic exegesis and jurisprudential compendiums are disregarded by them to varying degrees at the expense of centralizing the importance of Quran, in various ways, as a source of religious guidance. They uphold the Quran as the repository of all such details which are required by the Muslims in the observance of their religious deeds. Or, alternatively, they emphasize the importance of Quranic ideals and principles—purportedly supportive of independent reasoning and critical of stagnancy in religious thought and stalemate in its spirit—for a re-interpretation of Islam in order to bring about congruity between Islam and the challenges of modernity. Such Quranic ideals and principles, broadly defined or understood by them as emphasizing equity, justice and rationality among other aspects, are invoked to undermine other sources of religious guidance on the pretext of latter's incompatibility with the former. In this way, the Ahl al-Qur'an support their arguments both historically and theologically to develop a larger discourse on Islamic reform calling for a fresh interpretation of Quran, revision of its theological-scholastic basis and possibility of dynamism in Islamic law.

The purpose of the present study is to locate, within the historical context of British Punjab and later independent Pakistan, the origins of the various Ahl al-Qur'an movements starting in the late nineteenth (mainly from the writings of Sayyid Ahmad Khan among others) and early twentieth century and the trajectory of their ideas as espoused by various ideologies during different periods. It should be noted that Ahl al-Qur'an has been used as a 'generic' term in the present study. Since the Ahl al-Qur'an refers to more of a reformist religious discourse rather than a group assembled under a single banner or monolithic religious doctrine, no precise date can be given for their origin nor can any individual be credited for establishing it single-handedly.<sup>2</sup>

This study is aimed at making significant additions to the current academic debates on the diversity and dynamism of various aspects of South Asian Islam<sup>3</sup> while contributing to the study of the Ahl al-Qur'an movements, a field hitherto ignored in Western academic circles. In looking at the Ahl al-Qur'an movements, the present study will focus,

specifically, on the debates and contestations about religious reform in British India during the late nineteenth century, theological polemics among Ulama of various persuasions about the authority of the past in determining religious beliefs and practices, and the politics relating to the adoption of a particular interpretation of Islam by the power elites of Pakistan for the purposes of legitimizing and consolidating state authority.

Central to this study is the significance of the Ahl al-Qur'an ideas and movements in initiating a critical reassessment and questioning of texts—especially Hadith—previously regarded as sacred or held in high esteem insofar as they are believed to have served as sources of guidance and authority for Muslim beliefs and practices. It will be shown how Ahl al-Qur'an movements have carved out a distinct discursive space where new ideas about the Prophet and the authority of his words and actions could be discussed and its relevance vis-à-vis Quran as a binding source of religious guidance could be estimated. In doing so, they initiated an entirely new approach toward Islam and its sacred scripture that questions the relevance of the works of classical jurists, exegetes and traditionists and does not invoke the authority of the past. The study will also focus on the role played by various ideologues, especially Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi (d. 1916), Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari (d. 1936) and by Ghulam Ahmad Parwez (d. 1985), in defining the theoretical groundings of their respective Ahl al-Qur'an movement and establishing their organizational structure, mainly in the Punjab.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1. THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

After this brief preview of the Ahl al-Qur'an ideas, the following pages will now give a comprehensive overview of the historiographical approaches to the study of the multiple strands of socio-religious reform movements by scholars of South Asian and Islamic studies. Later in the chapter, a research framework for the critical evaluation of the Ahl al-Qur'an and other related themes highlighted above will be outlined.

Since the Hadith and various aspects of its study is a recurrent theme in the present work, this section begins with an overview of Hadith studies, its relevance to Islamic faith and the recent controversies surrounding its historicity.<sup>5</sup> This is followed by an assessment of the academic writings on the discourse of reform in South Asian Islam. It will highlight the information gaps that exist in the present corpus of literature—especially with regard to the Ahl al-Qur'an—and also some of

the conceptual problems which have progressively been addressed by various scholars over a period of time.

### 1.1.1. DISPUTATIONS REGARDING THE AUTHORITY AND AUTHENTICITY OF HADITH IN THE WESTERN ACADEMY

Hadith refers to the words and deeds transmitted on the authority of the Prophet which convey details about the actions he performed, approved, disapproved or condoned, along with his statements and sayings on various occasions in response to different situations. A complete Hadith consists of a text (*matn*) and information about its chain of transmitters (*isnad*). In more precise terms, *isnad* is the list of names of those who one after the other transmitted the information until it reached him who currently reports it.<sup>6</sup> The knowledge of Hadith (pl. Ahadith), acquired through a scholarly command of its various related fields of learning is vital for an understanding of the different aspects of Muslim faith and its history. The vast corpus of Hadith literature does not only record in minute detail each and every aspect of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) public and private life or the moral exhortations he made to his followers and adversaries alike, but is also considerably relevant for an interpretation of the Quran and information regarding the principles of Islamic law and polity. Another key term in Hadith studies, which is mostly taken to be synonymous with Hadith in its meaning and scope, is that of Sunnat. While Hadith is the narration of the behaviour of the Prophet, Sunnat is the law or practice deduced from this narration. In other words, Hadith is the 'carrier' and 'vehicle' of the Sunnat.<sup>7</sup>

While the question of the Prophet's authority and authenticity of Hadith literature is a settled one for the proponents of Hadith, the Ahl al-Qur'an seek to reappraise the notion of whether the Prophet had, in the first place, any authority outside that of the strict precincts of the Quran and whether Hadith or Sunnat are authentic means and reliable vehicles of its transmission for authoritatively defining the beliefs and determining the practices of the present-day Muslims. Hence, the Ahl al-Qur'an—in different ways and to varying extents—challenge the relevance of Hadith as a source of guidance not just because they are sceptical of the historicity of Prophet's recorded words and reported actions in the form of Hadith or Sunnat, but also because they question the authority of the Prophet in the first place on the basis of which derivations relating to Islamic beliefs and practices are made.

The historicity of Hadith literature had become controversial before the Ahl al-Qur'an in the modern history of South Asian Islam raised this issue. It had started with the writings of such Orientalists as Gustav Weil, Alois Sprenger and William Muir in the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Their main argument was that the Ahadith remained in oral circulation for more than a couple of centuries following Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) death before being finally recorded in a written format. What gave such revisionist discourses on the history of Hadith further impetus were the contributions of Ignaz Goldziher<sup>9</sup> in which he had argued that the bulk of Hadith literature was the result of various social and political developments and conscious efforts of the community to respond to these developments in the mature stages of the Islamic community.<sup>10</sup>

The most significant contribution to Western criticism of the historicity of Hadith literature was made by Joseph Schacht in the middle of the twentieth century. Schacht's main concern dealt with the origin and development of law in Muslim areas in the early phase of Muslim history and the tracking of the gradual processes involved therein which lead towards the evolution of a system of law that could be termed as Islamic insofar it was based on the Quran and Sunnat. It implies, contrary to the commonly held view among Muslim scholars, that the system of law prevailing in the Muslim world for a period spanning well over a century after the coming of Islam was not based on revealed sources.

What makes Schacht's thesis relevant to a revisionist estimate of the history of Hadith is his hypothesis that Sunnat remained a vague and undifferentiated concept signifying an emulative pattern of not just the Prophet but of many other figures of reverence and scholarship as well. These included, most importantly according to his thesis, ideologues of law or jurisprudential schools based in various major cities of the Muslim empire.<sup>11</sup> It was only with the influential second/third century Muslim jurist al-Shaf'i (d. AH 206/AD 820) that Sunnat was equated exclusively with the 'precedence of the Prophet', given an overriding authority over all other 'Sunnats' or individual opinions of the jurists and elevated to a divine status next only to Quran though not strictly subordinate to it.

After Shaf'i had been able to prove convincingly that Sunnat occupies a divine status and that it has to be verified by a corresponding Hadith—even if singularly reported—to be considered as valid and liable for acceptance, it was no longer possible for the adherents of ancient law schools to base their doctrines of law on the authority of the rulings and actions of the Prophet's Companions and prominent scholars among

them. Sunnat could no longer said to be best reflected in the practice of the community but was required to give up its broad meaning of any precedent in the favour of Prophet's normative behaviour and idealized practice as validated by a written account and furnished with strong Isnad basis. This development in Muslim jurisprudence brought about by Shaf'i, forced the ancient law schools to invest their doctrines with the authority of the Prophet and to give up the use of his Companion's reports in the making of law. Hence the rulings and sayings of the 'patron-saint' Companion and successive scholars identified with the ancient school, according to Schacht, had to be fabricated with fake *isnads*. This process of projecting the legal doctrines backward from the successors of the Prophet to his Companions and ultimately to the Prophet began during the first half of the second century of Islam and continued well into the third. In Schacht's words:

A great many traditions in the classical and other collections were put into circulation only after Shaf'i's time; the first considerable body of legal traditions from the Prophet originated towards the middle of the second century, in opposition to slightly earlier traditions from Companions and other authorities, and to the 'living tradition' of the ancient schools of law; ... the isnads show a tendency to grow backwards and to claim higher and higher authority until they arrive at the Prophet.<sup>12</sup>

This linking of a doctrine with a saying of the Prophet had to be done in order to guarantee the prevalence of one's doctrines over and against the competing ones while giving it a distinct and exclusive outlook in this process. It is this need for backward projection of the doctrine back to the days of the Prophet that, according to Schacht, resulted in a widespread fabrication of Hadith.

Since the publication of Schacht's work in 1950s, the trend has been either to support or reject his thesis, or at the most make slight adjustments to it in the wake of additional research material as it becomes available while accepting as valid bulk of the arguments put forward by him. Among most avowed supporters of Schacht's theory are John Wansbrough,<sup>13</sup> Martin Hinds, Michael Cook and Patricia Crone<sup>14</sup> who have carried his argument to the radical extreme of questioning the historical origins of Muhammad as a Prophet and the possibility of Quran being 'authored' at a later period than being generally claimed and believed. Some Muslim and Western scholars alike have refuted Schacht's thesis. They include Dr Muhammad Hamidullah,<sup>15</sup> Mustafa al-Azami,<sup>16</sup> M.Z. Siddiqi,<sup>17</sup> Fuat Sezgin,<sup>18</sup> and Nabia Abbott.<sup>19</sup> The third group of



scholars can be further divided into two categories. The first among them agree with Schacht in regarding as spurious the traditions as they are found in the present day written collections. But they do not accept the claim that there were no traditions in circulation for such a long period. Scholars with this point of view include Noel Coulson,<sup>20</sup> John Burton,<sup>21</sup> David S. Powers,<sup>22</sup> and G.H.A. Juynboll.<sup>23</sup> The other sub-category of these scholars have their differences with regard to methodology of dating the traditions to determine the extent and possibility of its fabrication. They include Harold Motzki,<sup>24</sup> Joseph van Ess,<sup>25</sup> and Gregor Schoeler.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.1.2. STUDIES ON MODERN SOUTH ASIAN ISLAM

A number of earlier and recent studies on modern South Asian Islam have helped broaden our understanding of the dynamics of Muslim politics and discourses on reform of Islamic traditions after the formal loss of political power in 1857 and the concomitant ascendancy of British authority in South Asia. In this regard pioneering work was done by Aziz Ahmad<sup>27</sup> whose book continues to be quoted in every major study on modern South Asian Islam. It would be true to say that Aziz Ahmad laid down the initial framework for analyzing this turbulent phase in the history of South Asian Islam. Although Ahmad dealt with every major Muslim movement and their leaders, it was left for successive generation of Western and South Asian scholars to expand on various themes explored in his book and give detailed accounts of important religious groups. In the subsequent decades a number of studies were carried out dealing with the Deoband,<sup>28</sup> Barelwi<sup>29</sup> and Ahl-i-Hadith<sup>30</sup> movements. Some of the important religious seminaries were also studied at length, especially Nadwa<sup>31</sup> and Farangi Mahal.<sup>32</sup> Among 'heretical' groups, the Ahmadiya movement<sup>33</sup>—unanimously censured by all non-Ahmadi Sunnis (and Shi'a) as being outside the pale of Islam—has received considerable attention.

While the literature on South Asian Islam is rich in information about those religious trends and movements considered politically relevant, there exists hardly any detailed work on the Ahl al-Qur'an in Western academia. The sole exception is the work of Daniel W. Brown which is the only study in modern Western literature on Islam that comes close to dealing with the Ahl al-Qur'an.<sup>34</sup> Yet this study, too, is rather sketchy since the author has relied mostly on secondary literature for the literature produced by the proponents themselves is hard to access. This has resulted in some

factual errors and a lopsided representation of the views of important Ahl al-Qur'an figures.

The leading scholars of South Asian Islam have also given negligible attention to the Ahl al-Qur'an and have erred in analyzing their religious doctrines. Aziz Ahmad has described them as a 'fundamentalist splinter group of Ahl-i-Hadith' while Francis Robinson has referred to them as puritanical. Barbara Metcalf attributes the origin of Ahl al-Qur'an to a bitter internal dispute among the Ahl-i-Hadith and does not take into reckoning the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Punjab in which these movements emerged.<sup>35</sup> The main flaw of these explanations is the linking of the Ahl al-Qur'an with the Ahl-i-Hadith. Brown has described the Ahl al-Qur'an as an extension of the Ahl-i-Hadith. In this presumption he is guided by the fact that Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi, Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari and Aslam Jayrajpuri—important figures related to Ahl al-Qur'an movements—share an Ahl-i-Hadith ancestry to different extents. Maulwi 'Abdullah was a professed Ahl-i-Hadith follower for a long time and prayer leader at one of its oldest and major mosques in Lahore named Chiniyan Wali Masjid. Ahmad-ud-Din's mentor Ghulam-ul-'Ali Qusuri was an important Ahl-i-Hadith figure of Amritsar and tutored many of its influential scholars. Aslam Jayrajpuri's father Salamat Ullah Jayrajpuri was a known Ahl-i-Hadith scholar in the service of Bhopal state under Navab Siddiq Hasan Khan.

From these details about the background to the life and ideas of Ahl al-Qur'an ideologues, Metcalf and Brown have erroneously inferred that Ahl al-Qur'an is a logical continuation or culmination of the dogmatic approach adopted by the Ahl-i-Hadith. In the light of the research framework that will be outlined for the present study, it will be shown that such a description of Ahl al-Qur'an's religious doctrines is flawed insofar as it overemphasizes the religious background of the ideologues without probing into their actual writings or problematizing such categories as 'scripturalist' Islam.

This lack of careful scholarly attention given to the Ahl al-Qur'an may well be attributed to the fact that the relative strength and impact of their ideas have been estimated as confined to a rather limited section of the population. It has generally been presumed that the Ahl al-Qur'an never reached a level of influence where they could be regarded as politically relevant or capable of disrupting the established norms, practices, and beliefs of the overwhelming majority of South Asian Muslims. The present study would help revise such assessments about the theological



underpinnings, historical contexts and the relative strengths of the various Ahl al-Qur'an movements.

### 1.1.3. THEORETICAL DEBATES ABOUT SOUTH ASIAN ISLAM

The historiographical trends concerning the history of South Asian Islam and Muslims have invariably been shaped by various academic debates and political considerations. In analyzing these recent theoretical debates, an attempt has also been made to contextualize their ideas from a historical perspective.

Scholars of Islamic studies have, for a long period of time, perceived Islam as an essentialized category. Among these scholars may be included Muslim academics as well as those trained in traditional Islamic studies. The underlying presumption has been that Islam can be understood by studying some sacred texts, like the Quran, from which the laws, practices, ethics and moral code are derived and the social behaviour of all the Muslims—regardless of their cultural milieu and historical experiences—determined. This encapsulation of Islam within textual authorities has been responsible for the erroneous presumption that the Muslim community is remarkably homogeneous.

One notable exception in this regard is Muhammad Mujeeb's work on the Indian Muslims published in the 1960s. He took note of the diversities of Muslim communities in South Asia and argued that this diversity only served to exalt the idea of unity. He cautioned against confusing the 'identity of the Indian Muslims as believers in Islam with their identity as a distinct body politic, as a nation, which they never were and never wanted to be.'<sup>36</sup> Mujeeb did not elaborate upon a theoretical framework for the study of the plurality of religious traditions of South Asian Muslims.

In the 1970s the question of the plurality of religious traditions in Islam came to dominate the intellectual debate. The sociological and anthropological exploration of South Asian Islam carried out in a special volume of *Contributions to Indian Sociology* in 1972, devoted exclusively to the Muslim communities of South Asia, laid down the discursive basis for a new approach of critical inquiry in this field.<sup>37</sup> Imtiaz Ahmad, a sociologist by training based at the Jamia Millia, Delhi, published a series of volumes on the rituals and religious practices of various Muslim groups in the years that followed. His main argument was that the study of South Asian Islam and Muslim communities had long been considered the domain of Historians, 'Islamicists' (academics working on Islam) and

Orientalists who had, due to disciplinary bias, occupied themselves with studying textual sources and deriving their opinions thereof. It was on the basis of these textual sources that they had come to regard Islam as a closed system of well-defined beliefs and practices and Muslims as a monolithic community which exhibited a remarkable uniformity of outlook and shared a considerable amount of religious and doctrinal values. Ahmad accused such scholars of basing their opinion on a preconceived ideal of orthodox Islam derived from the Islamic sacred texts which Muslims strive to follow or conform to. In their studies these Islamicists had been contending that 'Islam could be described in terms of certain clear-cut theological and philosophical principles and an accompanying social system, and the study of Islam was restricted to those aspects of the religious system to the exclusion of other facets.'<sup>38</sup>

Ahmad identified two serious limitations of such a concept of Islam and the Muslim communities. First, it confuses the formal religious ideology of Islam with the everyday beliefs and practices of Muslims. The yawning gap between the two could not be addressed within the inhibitory conceptualization of the religion as a closed system made by the Islamicists. Second, it overemphasizes specific Muslim groups and *types* which adhere to 'scriptural Islam' to the exclusion of a number of other local Muslim traditions.<sup>40</sup>

In order to retrieve these local traditions, beliefs and practices and attempt to establish a parallel discourse on the plurality of South Asian Islam juxtaposed to an allegedly monolithic conceptualization of Islam by historians and Islamicists, Imtiaz Ahmad took recourse to the 'scientific' disciplines of sociology and anthropology. Ahmad's contention was that Islamicists and Historians saw Islam, derived from written sources, as a world religion unfolding in a common uniform pattern. Sociologists and anthropologists could, instead, credit Islam with an autonomous role and a dynamic spirit shaping the course of its destiny in response to peculiar local demands and temporal settings.<sup>40</sup> In his own conceptualization of South Asian Islam, Ahmad arrived at a hierarchical gradation of 'Islams' in South Asia and described the level of equilibrium between them. According to Ahmad:

The first level of South Asian Islam comprises of the beliefs and values that are traditionally described as orthodox Islam. They are derived from the Islamic religious texts, and command the awe that commonly attached to sacred precepts. ... However, these beliefs and values are essentially ideals enjoined upon all Muslims. Correspondence between them and actual behaviour is a more open question. ... The second level of South Asian Islam includes beliefs

and values of a more limited spread. They are not derived from the Islamic literature, and it is not necessary that they must always accord with the beliefs and values of orthodox Islam. Sometimes they may even be opposed and antithetical to the latter. However, they are regarded by the Muslims who hold them as truly Islamic. ... The third level in South Asian Islam comprises of beliefs and behaviours described by social anthropologists as pragmatic religion. It contains a large number of non-philosophical elements such as supernatural theories of disease causation, propitiation of Muslim saints, and, occasionally at least, deities of the Hindu pantheon or other crude phenomena as spirit possession, evil eye etc. Most of the elements of South Asian Islam at this level are strongly antithetical to the beliefs and values prevalent at the other two levels and are so regarded by Muslims. ... The three levels identified above exist side by side and each is popularly included into the corpus of beliefs and behaviours characterized as South Asian Islam. It is perhaps the simultaneous presence of these three different levels that has made South Asian Islam at once rigid and elastic<sup>41</sup>

This dichotomy and gradation of religious traditions was denoted by Ahmad and other scholars along the binaries of Orthodox-Heterodox or Scriptural/Normative and Popular/Folk or Local/Customary Islam. Others ascribed different taxonomies to them. Ali Asani differentiated between a 'Rustic Tradition' which 'on the basis of its appeal and popularity among the rural, illiterate masses' was characterized 'variously as the folk, low or little tradition'. Contrasting or complementing this Rustic Tradition 'is the more sophisticated, intellectual facet of Islamic civilization that developed in urban areas under the cultural influence of the important Muslim elite of Persian or Central Asian origin.'<sup>42</sup> Or, as Anwar Alam recently remarked in the context of Muslim presence in European multicultural societies, there is a bi-polar, totalizing and homogenizing feature of 'Scholarly Islam' in comparison to a multiple, fuzzy and non-ideological character of 'Everyday Islam'<sup>43</sup> which promotes the prospect of social and political integration into society.

While the merits of such a demarcation of levels in South Asian Islam were disputed by other scholars—to which we will come shortly—it, nevertheless, helped to expose the Islamicist and Historian's inhibitory framework, which was inadequately equipped to take note of 'un-typical' Muslim groups and their beliefs and practices and to address them in an academically fruitful way. Asim Roy has effectively summed up the limitation of the traditionally prevalent approach among such academics in these words:

The most common approach for them [i.e. Historians and Islamicists] has been to measure up all 'popular' expressions of the religion against the norms, practices, and prescriptions of 'scriptural' Islam, and trash everything that fails to measure up into the dark and bottomless pit of 'folk' Islam. The sheer convenience of resorting to this ill-defined and amorphous intellectual dumping ground of 'folk' Islam lies at the roots of an endemic failure on the part of Historians and Islamicists to offer a critical and convincing analytical frame to probe this phenomenon.<sup>44</sup>

Roy then goes on to cite examples from the works of certain notable scholars working in this field; 'For Muhammad Mujeeb, the practitioners of popular Islam were "partly converted"; for Peter Hardy "census Muslims", and for Francis Robinson "half Islamized peoples". At the "popular level", according to Aziz Ahmad, "Indian Islam represents a mosaic of *demotic, superstitious and syncretistic beliefs*".<sup>45</sup>

Ahmad's work generated a response from Francis Robinson. Writing from Historian and Islamicist's perspective, Robinson found Ahmad's gradations too tightly compartmentalized to allow for any dynamic situation in which the possibility of a high Islamic tradition eating into local custom-centred tradition, and vice versa, could be conceived. For Ahmad, the only form of their existence is in complementation to each other as an integral part of a common religious system.<sup>46</sup> Robinson, on the other hand, argued that Islam offers a pattern of perfection for man to follow in every aspect of human activity as prescribed in the scriptures and gathered together in the form of Shari'at. The existence of four different legal schools in Sunni Islam alone and the prevalence of 'non-Islamic' practices acquiring the force of law among the Muslims does not preclude Robinson from inferring that the spirit of dynamism in Islamic religious tradition is towards the realization of a pattern of perfection. In his view:

Islamic history, therefore, offers abundant evidence that there is a dynamic relationship between Muslim societies and the pattern of perfection transmitted and exemplified by learned and holy men. More often than not, over the past fourteen centuries, Muslim societies have moved towards a greater realization of that pattern of perfection.<sup>47</sup>

Robinson is correct in asserting that the idea of a permanent state of equilibrium between scriptural faith and customary practice is fundamentally unhistorical and that there is bound to be movement, one way or the other, 'between visions of perfect Muslim life and those which

ordinary Muslims lead.<sup>48</sup> The problem with Robinson and Ahmad's hypotheses is that they both agree, in principle, on the existence of a normative or orthodox Islam constituting a pattern of perfection which seems to be an unchanging essence.<sup>49</sup> In doing that both have erred in estimating the dynamism and variety of the scriptural sources themselves and the continuous process of interpretation to which they have been put over the course of centuries.

## 1.2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

On the basis of the historiographical survey and critique of Western academy's works on South Asian Islam—and especially the Ahl al-Qur'an movements—it can be argued that there is a lack of requisite information and research framework for an academically fruitful inquiry of the Ahl al-Qur'an movements. In the following pages, critical insights will be offered in order to develop a research framework for a study which not only enriches the existing corpus on South Asian Islam by providing factual information, hitherto unavailable, about the Ahl al-Qur'an movements but also suggest certain theoretical correctives. This will help explore the plurality of religious traditions within South Asian Islam, deconstruct the inhibitory notion of a monolithic Islamic tradition and help fill the information gap about the Ahl al-Qur'an movements.

### 1.2.1. ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

To begin with, as a critique of Ahmad-Robinson debate, this study argues that instead of referring to such heuristic labels as Orthodox or Heterodox Islam, a more appropriate term of Islamic religious traditions is to be used. It is because such a term allows the incorporation of plurality of visions and academically diverse approaches to the study and understanding of Islam. Within the repertoire of Islamic religious traditions one can include such 'scriptural' sources as the Quran, Hadith collections, and jurisprudential compendiums along with a wide range of other sources including historical chronicles, biographies of the Prophet, his Companions, and saints, along with hymns, travel memoirs, and more. As Richard Eaton has noted, the significance attached to them by their adherents or believers is not entirely due to their perceived intrinsically divine origins or sacredness but because these sources are discursively located; i.e. they are traceable in written or oral genres that have sufficient historical depth and credibility to lend them the weight of authority and

relate them in some way to the Quran or the Traditions of the Prophet.<sup>50</sup> Thus, Islamic religious traditions, including those which are scripture based—which, primarily, means the Quran and the Hadith—are not only diverse but are also historically constituted and, hence, always subject to contestation and redefinition.<sup>51</sup> So there does not exist a conceptual basis for a normative or uniform pattern of excellence and a static Islamic orthodoxy. At the most, then, Orthodox Islam can be described, in Clifford Greetz's words, as an 'Islam which strives to be Orthodox'.<sup>52</sup>

In the light of such an understanding of the Islamic religious traditions, the present study offers a differentiated interpretation of these traditions and a more nuanced reading of the textual sources that have an impact in their making. It offers alternative perspectives on and revised view of the history of South Asian Muslims by emphasizing the multiplicity of religious traditions in Islam by taking into cognizance its historical context and variegation of its forms.

### 1.2.2. REIFICATION OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND ISNAD PARADIGM

Also, against the backdrop of inadequacy of a term like 'scripturalism', it has been argued that those labelled as scripturalists should alternatively be understood as espousing a 'reified tradition' within the larger discursive space of Islamic religious traditions. The theoretical underpinnings of those adhering to reified Islamic tradition are not dissimilar from the Islamicist's construct of Islamic essentialism. They envision Islam as a closed religious system with clearly defined dogmas and practices, encapsulated in the works of the scholars of Islam, matchless in their eruditeness and piety, written hundreds of years ago with there being hardly any need or room for further improvement, addition or revision.

As already pointed out, there is no denying the existence of such traditions in the Muslim history or the attempts to enforce them as a normative practice or standard set of beliefs. What needs to be emphasized is that these reified Islamic traditions, as they were historically constituted in the nineteenth century, in comparison to any other period in the history of Muslims, were limited to certain groups who enforced (or at least tried to enforce) strict religiosity among their followers, claimed inspiration from the works of influential eighteenth century Muslim scholars, and exhibited a considerable difference of opinion and approach among themselves. The Ulama of Deoband, Ahl-i-Hadith and Barelwi schools—major theological schools of Sunni persuasion originating in



nineteenth century India but claiming ideological descent from such scholars as Shah Wali Ullah to varying degrees—privileged specific aspects of the reified Islamic tradition or one textual source over others in their understanding of Islam. This is testified to by the emergence, and subsequent crystallization of doctrinal creeds and practices, of these Sunni groups.<sup>53</sup> In this way the concept of reified Islamic traditions, in comparison to the Islamicists' concept of a timeless and ahistorical 'orthodoxy', takes into account the historicity of these traditions, their discursive location, plurality of forms and the limits of their influence.

The most important doctrinal aspect of the practitioners of reified Islamic traditions, as highlighted in the present study, is their recognition of the implicit 'sense of connectedness', described by William Graham as 'Isnad Paradigm', which links the believers with the Quran and the idealized age of the Prophet in which it was revealed and implemented to perfection. According to him, this paradigm is derived from the central Islamic religious authority of Hadith which has been based upon the use of the Isnad or 'supporting chains' that accompany the *matn* (text) of every individual Hadith. The defining elements of the Isnad paradigm enumerated by Graham are:

"(1) derivation of authority primarily or even, in extreme cases, solely from (2) linkage to a sacred, but historical, time of origins of the tradition through (3) a chain of personal transmission, the individual human links of which represent all intervening generations between that of the original source (ideally the Prophet or one of his Companions) and that of the last reporter. This paradigm is, in turn, the mechanism or overt vehicle for the realization of *ittisaliyah*, the personal connectedness .... It is the "golden chain of sincere Muslims" that guarantees the faithful copying, memorizing, reciting, and understanding of texts—not only those of the Hadith, but those of the Quran and all subsequent works of Muslim piety and learning."<sup>54</sup>

It can be inferred from Graham's theorization that the authority of a text in traditional Islamic epistemology of the pre-print era has been dependent on the textual ancestry and authorship of the text as well as on the record of its dissemination. In the latter, however, oral rendition and recited communication was considered more credible in maintaining a reliable constancy of meaning as compared to the written text which was seen as harbouring a greater prospect of being misinterpreted. As Brinkley Messick has theorized:

"the general misreadability of the [written] medium was dangerously extended by the open potentiality of the texts themselves. An author's voice, and thus his presence and his truth, could be securely recovered only through the technique of recitation. All this was especially crucial in connection with the sacred text and similarly treated authoritative texts, including fiqh manuals and hadith reports, which partook of the privileged quality of the recited word."<sup>55</sup>

This is why the oral record of Hadith literature is hardly a discredit for its authenticity in the eyes of traditional Ulama.<sup>56</sup>

The Isnad paradigm, thus, entails a personally guaranteed connection to a model past and authoritative transmission of religious guidance through reliable human beings epitomized for their virtue, piety and knowledge. It also establishes, for Muslims of the 'post active prophetic-revelatory period', an unbroken connection with the idealized community existing under the Prophet.<sup>57</sup> The authority of the past in the form of the Isnad paradigm not only incorporates within its contours the textual authority—whether orally handed down from the past or preserved in written form—of Hadith reports, exegetical writings and jurisprudential findings of learned scholars of yesteryears but also a personal contact with the revered individual associated with these sources.

A discursive link to the divine sources and past authorities in the form of Isnad paradigm is the defining component in the reification of Islamic traditions. It is for this reason that a continued connection with and faithful preservation of this Isnad paradigm—in which the Prophet, his Sunnat and Hadith, are followed by the exegetical and jurisprudential contributions of pious and learned scholars of Islam—has been the prime concern of such religious groups as the Deobandis, Ahl-i-Hadith and Barelwis. On the basis of it, they themselves have produced a whole corpus of literature dealing with Islam, its history, theology and other aspects relevant to the inculcation of a supposedly ideal practice of religion for an individual Muslim. Such Ulama's idea of religious reform, consciously formulated and expressed in terms of a formal theoretical discourse, seeks to *assert* an ideal or idealized past, identifying historical possibilities along with the practical and programmatic forms of its realization, on the basis of which a strict adherence to norms, practices and beliefs of an individual Muslim is to be modelled. In borrowing a conceptual framework that is not strictly confined to the study of Islam, this component of the Ulama's ideology can be referred to as its *problematic*.<sup>58</sup> The Isnad Paradigm, on the other hand, serves as the justificatory component of this ideology or the *thematic* which refers to



an epistemological as well as ethical—or in the present context, religious—framework supporting the claims of the problematic, the rules of inference on which it relies and the validation of its claims as historical possibilities and moral [read: religious] justification of its principles.<sup>59</sup>

The Isnad paradigm is a referential against which the reified Islamic traditions and the various reformist currents in discourse on Islam can be contrasted for an academic enquiry. In order to prove this point, reified Islamic religious traditions, based on the Isnad Paradigm, will be juxtaposed against the Ahl al-Qur'an movements which sought to sever this link with the past by calling upon the Muslims to rely on the Quran alone for the derivation of their religious beliefs and practices.

### **1.2.3. AHL AL-QUR'AN AND THE QUESTIONING OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE PAST**

The reformist current in the discourse on Islamic religious traditions, of which the Ahl al-Qur'an movements are a major contributor and the focus of present study, questions the edifice of a hierarchical order deriving its strength from the authority of the past. It finds fault with such an order which, in the interpretation of its proponents, stifles room for independent reasoning or fresh inquiry in Islamic scholastic, jurisprudential or legal matters while continuing with centuries old interpretations of Islamic doctrines and divine scriptures that are singularly incongruent with the dictates of modern times, rational-enlightened spirit and scientific developments.<sup>60</sup>

While foregrounding such intellectual and religio-political considerations, the Ahl al-Qur'an rectify the supposed aberration in the reified Islamic traditions by developing a discursive space supportive of ideals of religious dynamism, independent reasoning, scientific-rational spirit and a fresh interpretation of Islamic doctrines and scriptures. This they try to accomplish by questioning the validity of the edifice of Isnad paradigm and its continuing referential and reverential validity. While contemporary Muslim groups and movements aimed at articulating an authority and normative-performatory modes of action firmly embedded in the Isnad paradigm, the Ahl al-Qur'ans' Islam is made out of elision of such historical precedence and connectivity. They denounce—or at least critically question—the relevance or historicity of Hadith, question the findings of former exegetes and jurists, and lay emphasis on the Quran as the only authentic divine scripture worthy of providing guidance for Muslims and essential for projecting a universalistic vision of Islam that

is tolerant, all-embracing and rational. In deconstructing, seeking revision or questioning the relevance of the Isnad paradigm, Ahl al-Qur'an resort to a differential reading of the Quranic text, estimation of Prophet's authority, historicity of Hadith sources and validity of jurisprudential compendiums. The justificatory mode of these approaches towards the authority of past is derived partly—in addition to an undisputable belief on their part in the room for free enquiry envisaged by Islam—from an alternative model of an ideal or idealized past. This idealized past dates back to the days of the Prophet and the immediate decades following his death when the Quran alone, as imagined by the Ahl al-Qur'an, determined the course of action in Muslim polity and religious-societal affairs. This 'post active prophetic-revelatory period', as narrated by the Ahl al-Qur'an, is 'unalloyed' by Persian and other such influences—in terms of philosophical thought and epistemological patterns—inimical to the 'true' spirit of Islam. In this way, the Ahl al-Qur'an scholars seek to restore to the Quran the primacy from which it was supposedly dislodged after the reign of pious caliphs resulting in the sapping of the rational and egalitarian spirit of Islam.

Thus, the research framework developed in the foregoing paragraphs, offers a much needed corrective to the prevalent misunderstanding among the scholars about the doctrinal basis and historical origins of the Ahl al-Qur'an movements. What is most important with respect to the study of Ahl al-Qur'an movements is that within the ambit of this research framework, it becomes clear that the 'Quran-centric' approach of the Ahl al-Qur'an movements cannot be described as 'scripturalism' as some scholars have done. It is because unlike the 'Quran and Hadith only' approach of 'scripturalists' such as Ahl-i-Hadith, the Ahl al-Qur'an—in disregard of the Isnad paradigm—resort to a fresh interpretation of the Quran, understanding of the doctrinal basis of Islam and its legal-jurisprudential compendiums. Such an achievement is made because the Ahl al-Qur'an do not necessarily recognize the authority of the Prophet as the sole arbiter on the meaning of the Quran since they question the Prophet's authority or suspect the historicity of his recorded words about such affairs. Also, they do not seek legitimacy from the scholars of yesteryears invested with esteemed authority on the account of their personal piety and eruditeness of scholarship. With such an approach, the Ahl al-Qur'an open up Islamic religious traditions for revision, reform and contestation and not to their reification. This will further be shown while discussing the religious ideas of various Ahl al-Qur'an scholars in different chapters of the present study.

#### 1.2.4. THE TERM AHL AL-QUR'AN

In the present study, the term 'Ahl al-Qur'an' has been used as a 'generic' term denoting all those movements inspired by various individuals based mostly in Punjab during the twentieth century—notwithstanding the differences, contradictory approaches in their respective stances, and a dislike on the part of some among them to be labelled a distinct sect—who have challenged the Isnad paradigm in different ways. It includes within its contours a range of religious opinions based on a variety of theological presumptions leading to different sets of interpretations in response to multiple socio-political and economic factors and historical currents.

Therefore, in the present study, Ahl al-Qur'an is primarily a referential to a peculiar intellectual endeavour in the ongoing discourse on Islamic reform which evaluates the contours of Prophet's authority, sceptically looks at the authenticity of his recorded words and persistently seeks revisions of the estimated relative statuses of Quran and Hadith vis-à-vis each other and their respective capacities of guiding Muslims in matters of belief and practice. This helps emphasize that the Ahl al-Qur'an is not a term for an agreed upon dogma established along sectarian lines under a centralized authority or organization. But, while admitting that they exhibit a variety of ideas on Quran, Hadith, Prophet, and other sources of authority from the past, those described in this study as Ahl al-Qur'an groups and individuals still share the same discursive space insofar as they all challenge the imposing edifice of the Isnad paradigm. Hence, the use of this appellation is warranted by discursive similarities among the groups and individuals discussed in this study and not out of compulsion for any taxonomic convenience. This also explains why this term has been used for various individuals and organizations despite the fact that they themselves are opposed to their description as Ahl al-Qur'an.<sup>61</sup> Another reason for adopting the term Ahl al-Qur'an is that it helps avoid epithets like Munkirin-i-Hadith (Deniers of Hadith) and Chakralawis or Parwezis which—derived from the names of two among many Ahl al-Qur'an ideologues, 'Abdullah Chakralawi and Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, respectively—have come to assume a rather negative connotation and do not serve the purpose of fruitful academic enquiry of the historical context and theological mooring of these movements.<sup>62</sup> However, it should be noted that the term Ahl al-Qur'an does not favour the groups as the true adherents of the Quran and expounders of its teachings, as its meaning might suggest.<sup>63</sup>

### 1.3. SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

The dearth of academic writings on *Ahl al-Qur'an*, as already pointed out, is largely because of the problems in accessing the written works of important *Ahl al-Qur'an* scholars and the journals published by their respective organizations. Also, no special effort was made to retrieve such sources because it was supposed that these movements were insignificant as they had lapsed into oblivion without leaving a trace. Such an approach overlooks the fact that in developing the discursive space for contestations of fresh ideas about the Hadith, the Prophet and the Quran, the *Ahl al-Qur'an* contributed Quranic commentaries, histories of Hadith, biographies of the Prophet and polemical tracts. Their opponents, too, responded with writings on these subjects. This vast corpus of hitherto unexplored primary research material, retrieved from various public and private libraries, has served as the source material for the present study.<sup>64</sup> On the basis of the critical evaluation of this diverse array of sources, the present study argues that a historical probe into the origins of the *Ahl al-Qur'an* movement and a comprehension of their religious tenets is central to the understanding of the discourse on Islamic reform in South Asia.

Other than the written works of the *Ahl al-Qur'an* scholars and their opponents, archival sources have also been used. But except for Chapter 6, the colonial archival material has been of minor relevance to the present study. There is a lack of useful material relating to the *Ahl al-Qur'an* in the archives. This is probably because the ideas of the *Ahl al-Qur'an* did not directly challenge colonial authority nor did they incite polemical passion, albeit briefly and occasionally, to the point of threatening inter-communal and sectarian harmony on a noticeable level. This should be taken as a comment on the purposes of the maintenance of the colonial archive as an instrument for the politics of control and dominance rather than on the significance of the *Ahl al-Qur'an* movements.<sup>65</sup>

The variation of available sources and their contents help in substantiating the argument that the *Ahl al-Qur'an* does not denote an undifferentiated lot of scholars organized under the banner of a single organization or common set of beliefs. The textual analysis of these writings, in the light of the theoretical formulations laid down, gives a comprehensive view about the historical origins, religious ideas and the influence of the *Ahl al-Qur'an* movements. Other than the purely historical context, the present study—by making a direct recourse to the works of the *Ahl al-Qur'an* scholars—details the theological debates on

which many of these movements were premised in order to offer a better understanding of their religious exposition. On the basis of these theological differences, it has been shown that the individual movements and their ideologues addressed concerns relating to the centrality of the Quran, limits of the Prophet's authority and that of other authorities from the past in considerable variance to each other. The counter polemics, in theological terms, by the critics of the Ahl al-Qur'an, have been so presented as to delineate the plurality of opinion among the opposing Ulama themselves with regard to the discourse developed by the Ahl al-Qur'an. Such treatment of the available literature makes it possible to give credence to the stated hypothesis of variety in Islamic traditions even among those espousing a reified version of Islam. In this way the twin purposes of providing information about the Ahl al-Qur'an and adding new theoretical aspects to the discourse on South Asian Islam have been served.

For the research goal related to gauging the influence of the Ahl al-Qur'an movements or ideas in the discourse on Islam in South Asia, certain indicators have to be identified. The first among these indicators is the potential of these movements or individuals to generate a controversy inviting public attention, clerical backlash and possible intervention by, or recourse to, colonial authorities. This has been done in Chapter 4 where Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal's act of 'apostasy', declaration of *fatwa-i-kufr* (religious decree of heresy) against Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi and the litigation for vacating the Ahl al-Qur'an mosque serve as examples for the potential of these movements and individuals to generate controversy. The second important indicator is concerned with noticing the change in the religious ideas of the intended clientele of the Ahl al-Qur'an. They include the 'college graduates' and others with a non-specialized training in Islamic sciences. The religious worldview of such Muslims underwent considerable change under the influence of the Ahl al-Qur'an writings and the discourse of Islamic modernism. The details of this influence have been explored in Chapters 5 and 6. In these chapters the third indicator, concomitant with the preceding one, takes into consideration the theological shifts among the Ulama of reified tradition to prevent the alienation of Muslim subjects with similar non-madrasa educational backgrounds and exposure to influences of modernity. The last indicator measures the impact of Ahl al-Qur'an in the domain of politics. It has been established that the Ahl al-Qur'an's discourse on Islam was not simply an academic exercise between the proponents and opponents about certain ideas and theological presumptions. As Chapter



6 indicates the discourse had implications beyond the confines of an intellectual debate. It had a broader role in the context of the newly formed state of Pakistan where the ideologues and ideas related to Ahl al-Qur'an and Islamic modernism played no insignificant role in the shaping of its religious policies and their place in the newly formed state.

#### 1.4. OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study has been divided into seven chapters with Introduction and Concluding Remarks constituting independent chapters (Chapters 1 and 7 respectively). Chapter 2 provides a historical survey of the various Sunni Muslim groups that emerged during the later half of the nineteenth century and helps contextualize their theological affiliations and backgrounds. In particular, the contestations about Hadith and the Prophet in the Islamic religious traditions of these groups have been given prominence in this chapter.

The 'core' arguments of the study have been presented from Chapters 3 to 6. Chapter 3 offers an extensive assessment of the emerging new trends in the fields of Tafsir and Hadith spearheaded by Sayyid Ahmad Khan and those influenced by his thoughts. It has been argued in this chapter that the idea about the Quran as the only repository of Divine guidance and the primary sacred text of Islamic tradition had begun to gain currency among a few religious scholars in South Asia and beyond in the later half of the nineteenth century. In order to impress upon Muslims the primacy of the Quran as a universal, all-encompassing text with a rational approach, attempts were made by the likes of Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muhammad 'Abduh of Egypt to write 'rational commentaries' that were in tune with the impact of Colonialism, modernity and findings of the ongoing scientific developments. This required a fresh look at the Quran without the support of all extraneous material in the form of Hadith or classical Tafsir for the purpose of stripping the Quran of all its legendary tales and fables of supernatural events so as to reconcile dogma with modern intellectual attitudes. The dialectics of this new exegetical approach involved relocating the authority of the text through a process of interpretation whereby the details of history came to be of marginal significance and only the moral vision of Islam as a whole remained relevant.<sup>66</sup> In summing up Sayyid Ahmad Khan's religious ideas, the present study has observed that he has called for a rationalistic scrutiny of the contents of Hadith (*matn*) instead of

simply accepting them on the basis of their sound chains of transmission (*isnad*). This approach is in sharp contrast to some among the Ahl al-Qur'an who, in their extremity, go to the extent of declaring that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was invested with no special authority nor was he assigned any role other than that of faithfully relaying the divine revelation. This mitigation of Prophet's stature to that of a 'postman', as the opponents of Ahl al-Qur'an alleged was a wholly new idea, at least, in the context of modern Muslim studies on Hadith.<sup>67</sup> The analysis offered in the chapter attempts to highlight the influence of Sayyid Ahmad Khan in inspiring this more radically revisionist approach espoused by the Ahl al-Qur'an.

Chapter 4 probes the history of the shift from a paradigm envisaging a central role for the Prophet in matters of Islamic beliefs and practices to absolute reliance on the Quranic text for religious guidance as propounded by Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi (d. 1916) at the turn of the twentieth century. The origins of 'Abdullah Chakralawi's Ahl al-Qur'an movement have been discussed in the historical-political context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Punjab. It has been argued that during the period under consideration, inter-religious polemics (mostly among the Muslims, Christians and Arya Samajis) were being negotiated and disputative binaries of authentic versus inauthentic sacred texts and the vulgarity versus morality of their contents were brought into the foreground of contestations. For an understanding of Maulwi 'Abdullah's religious worldview and his contributions to the ongoing discourse and polemical disputations, the chapter analyzes the writings of Maulwi 'Abdullah on various aspects of Islam and contents of the journal *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* published by his Ahl al-Qur'an organization. The controversies generated by the religious polemics of Maulwi 'Abdullah and his opponents have also been taken note of.

Chapter 5 offers a critical appraisal of an Amritsar-based Ahl al-Qur'an group named Ummat-i-Muslima. The main thrust underlying the religious ideas of Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari has been described as an attempt to project Islam as a universal religion. For the purpose of further substantiation, Ahmad-ud-Din's exegetical and other writings have been probed. On the basis of textual analysis of these sources, it has been argued that Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din's projection of Islam as a universal religion had as its fulcrum the emphasizing of the universally humanist teachings of Islam. This required, on Ahmad-ud-Din's part, extricating Arab-centricity out of Islamic injunctions and extending reverence to all the prophets and prophet-like figures of the world instead of an exclusive

focus on the personage of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The differences in the respective approaches of Maulwi 'Abdullah and Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari towards the Isnad paradigm in general and Hadith or Prophet in particular have also been pointed out. It has been argued in the chapter that the two scholars share a similar stance on Hadith with the difference that Ahmad-ud-Din does not endorse replacement of Hadith with Quran in all those aspects of religion for which non-Quranic sources like Hadith, Tafsir and Fiqh are generally used. While Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari absolves himself of the responsibility of furnishing details for the Quran-based ritual observances by holding the view that the external form of these rituals matters little, other Ahl al-Qur'an scholars have negotiated the information vacuum arising from the exclusion of the Prophet's authority in a variety of ways. In this regard, the views of such scholars as Aslam Jayrajpuri, Professor of History and Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia in Delhi, Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi and Tamanna 'Imadi have been referred to. Of most significance is the alternative suggested by Jayrajpuri who has opined that the prevalent mode of Muslim ritual observances is valid for its consonance with Sunnat-i-Mutwatir, i.e. a tradition or Sunnat of the Prophet that has been practiced by such a large segment of Muslim population over such a long period of time that it cannot qualify to be untrue. The chapter also discusses the impact of Ahl al-Qur'an ideas, or the popularity of this alternative discourse on the Isnad paradigm, among the 'college educated' Muslims. In the same chapter, an account has been given of scholars like Maulana Maududi and Amin Ahsan Islahi who, while believing in the authority of the Prophet, the authenticity of his recorded words and the eruditeness of classical scholars, did not wholly rule out the possibility of revisiting some aspects of the Shari'at and historical details as encoded in the texts of esteemed religious authorities.

Chapter 6 is a detailed account of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez's Tulu'-i-Islam as the most important Ahl al-Qur'an organization after 1947. The focus is on Parwez's suggested line of reformist action for the nascent Muslim state and its system of laws. The chapter explains that the basic premise of Parwez's religious thought rests on outlining the principles of an Islamic state which can be entrusted with assuming the task of progressively interpreting Quranic injunctions in accordance with the dictates of changing spatial-temporal settings. Concomitant with Parwez's concept of such an Islamic state is his emphasis on establishing a socio-economic order that caters for the material needs of the Muslims. His ideas are shown as having an impact in the drafting of (amended) family



laws in 1961 and similar policies of Islamic modernism in Pakistan. The chapter also discloses the details of Parwez's close connivance with General Ayub Khan during the 1960s in order to highlight the steps taken to institutionalize Islamic modernism in Pakistan. On the basis of hitherto unexplored primary source material, the chapter adds considerable new information and a different theoretical understanding about the politics of Islam in Pakistan during the period 1947–69. It has been argued that the discourse of Islamic modernism was central to the politics of Islam in Pakistan during the period specified. It helped the 'power elites' in achieving their vested interest of precluding the Ulama from the state structure; preventing Pakistan from being run along reified traditions of Islam; forging an Islam-based national identity to subdue the centrifugal pull of ethnic sub-nationalisms; and actualizing their own religious ideals in the shaping of the new state.

In the conclusion an overall assessment of the role and influence of Ahl al-Qur'an movements and ideas during the twentieth century has been undertaken. Also, an attempt has been made to underline the impact of Ahl al-Qur'an movements on the approaches of more traditional scholars of Islam and a growing trend of questioning the 'controversial' Ahadith in the contemporary popular and specialized literature on Islam. In this way the present study attempts to trace the trajectory of Ahl al-Qur'an thought from the late nineteenth century up to the present times.

## NOTES

1. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam: Selected Studies* (The Hague, 1981), 127–8.
2. The term Ahl al-Qur'an and a nuanced understanding of the complexities of its usage has been discussed in greater detail later in the Introduction.
3. The term South Asian Islam is not to be understood as a category or distinct religious tradition with certain recognizable features which sets it apart from 'Islams' outside South Asia. It has simply been used as a referential to explore the history of Islam in South Asia.
4. Some of the Ahl al-Qur'an scholars, like Tamanna 'Imadi (1888–1972) and 'Umar Ahmad 'Usmani (d. 1991), were not Punjab-based but their contributions have also been discussed in order to give a comprehensive picture of the Ahl al-Qur'an religious doctrines and gauge the influence of these individuals on the various Ahl al-Qur'an movements operating in the Punjab.
5. In addition, several appendices have been attached in which an attempt has been made to give a brief account of the major Hadith collections and their compilers. The key terms used in Hadith sciences have also been explained so as to facilitate the understanding of a general reader about the theological contestations, described in

various chapters of the present work, between the Ulama of disparate persuasions on the authority and authenticity of Hadith.

6. John Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadith* (Edinburgh, 1994), 29.
7. Ahmad Hasan, *The Early Development of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Islamabad, 2001), 86.
8. See Chapter 3 for details.
9. Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle, 1889); for English translation, cf. *Muslim Studies*, ed. S.M. Stern, trans. C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern (Chicago, 1967–71).
10. For a comprehensive account of various academic debates between the Muslim and western scholars about the historicity of Hadith literature, cf. Ali Usman Qasmi, 'The History of Hadith Literature: A Review of Muslim and Western Theoretical Perspectives', in: *The Historian* 7, 2 (July–December 2009): 43–79.
11. The early Muslim practitioners of law and their schools of jurisprudence have been described by Schacht as 'ancient schools' of law in Islam which evolved around different Companions of the Prophet in different cities and were reflective of the variety of opinions exercised by them in accordance with the local traditions, customs and law of that region. This determined the customary or generally agreed practice of the community in that region, the so called 'living tradition', which was an incorporation of pre-Islamic customs within local normative practices on the basis of their being continuous from the days of Prophet, and not derived solely from a body of traditions handed down from the Prophet or even his Companions. These ancient schools were geographically determined and as they were gradually transformed into 'personal schools', they became increasingly centred on some prominent Companion settled in that area and dependent upon that Companion for putting their doctrines as a whole under his aegis and referring to him as their authority in general terms. For details, cf. Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford, 1966); *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1967).
12. Schacht, *Origins*, 4–5. In the light of this statement it can be inferred that the practice existed first and traditions from the Prophet and from the Companions appeared later. Schacht's thesis is methodologically grounded on argument *e silentio*. Schacht states it as: "The best way of proving that a tradition did not exist at a certain time is to show that it was not used as a legal argument in a discussion which would have made reference to it imperative, if it had existed." *Ibid.*, 140.
13. John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford, 1978); *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford, 1977).
14. Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge, 1986); Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1977). More recently, some German scholars have come up with even more radically revisionist views about Quran. Gerd R. Puin, a German specialist in Arabic calligraphy and Quranic palaeography, has been working on the fragments of the Quran discovered in Yemen during 1970s. His detailed study has not come out as yet. His preliminary findings suggest the Quran as a 'cocktail of texts' many of which may even be a hundred years older than Islam itself. Puin has yet to come up with a detailed study of these manuscripts. For more details, cf. Gerd R. Puin, 'Observations on Early Quran Manuscripts in Sanai' in Stefan Wild, ed. *The Quran as Text* (Leiden, 1996), 107–111. More recently, Christoph Luxenberg has argued that Arabic as a language matured at least two centuries after the death of Prophet Muhammad and so did the grammatical-lexicographical works attending to the needs of this newly formed language. A better understanding of the Quran,

therefore, demands that the Syro-Aramaic content of the Quran—which comprises of at least 30 per cent of the whole text of the Quran—should be taken into consideration. Such a reading of the Quran reveals strikingly different meaning and interpretation of words and rulings than what the Muslim commentators of Quran have been giving for centuries. Christoph Luxenberg, *Die Syro-Aramäische Lesart des Koran: Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache* (Berlin, 2000). The English version of the book has recently been published under the title *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran: A Contribution to the Decoding of the Koran* (Berlin, 2007).

15. Dr Muhammad Hamidullah, *Sahifa Hammam Ibn Munnabihi: The Earliest Extant Work on the Hadith* (Paris, 1979).
16. Mustafa al-Azami, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (Lahore, 2001); *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (Lahore, 2002).
17. M. Z. Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features* (Lahore, 2001).
18. Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums*, I (Leiden, 1967).
19. Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, vol. II: *Quranic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago, 1967).
20. N.J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Laws* (Edinburgh, 1964).
21. John Burton, *The Collection of the Quran* (Cambridge, 1977); *An Introduction to the Hadith* (Edinburgh, 1994); *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (Edinburgh, 1990).
22. David S. Powers, *Studies in Qur'an and Hadith: The Formation of the Islamic Law of Inheritance* (Berkeley, 1986).
23. G.H.A. Juynboll, *The Authenticity of the Tradition in Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt* (Leiden, 1969).
24. Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools* (Leiden, 2002); "Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey," *Arabica* LII, no. 2 (2005): 204–53; ed. *Hadith: Origins and Developments* (Aldershot, 2004); ed. *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of Sources* (Leiden, 2000).
25. Joels von Ess, *Zwischen Hadit und Theologie. Studien zum Entstehen Prädestinarianischer Überlieferung* (Berlin, 1975).
26. George Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie der Muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin, 1996). For details regarding the respective stances of these individual scholars on Hadith, cf. Harold Motzki, ed., 'Introduction' in *Hadith: Origins and Developments* (Aldershot, 2004), xxvi.
27. Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan: 1857–1964* (London, 1970).
28. Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860–1900* (Princeton, 1982).
29. Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilwi and his Movement, 1870–1920* (Delhi, 1996).
30. Martin Riexinger, *Sana'ullah Amrisari (1868–1948) und die Ahl-i Hadis im Punjab unter Britischer Herrschaft* (Würzburg, 2004).
31. Jamal Malik, *Islamische Gelehrtenkultur in Nordindien: Entwicklungsgeschichte und Tendenzen am Beispiel von Lucknow* (Leiden, 1997).
32. Francis Robinson, *The Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (London, 2001).
33. Spencer Lavan, *The Ahmadiyah Movement: A History and Perspective* (Delhi, 1974); Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and its Medieval Background* (Berkeley, 1989).

34. Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, 1999).
35. These scholars have devoted not more than three pages on discussing the Ahl al-Qur'an, Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*, 120–1; Francis Robinson, *Islam, South Asia and the West* (New Delhi, 2007), 65–6; Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 289; Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (New Delhi, 2003), 95; Murray T. Titus, *Islam in India and Pakistan: A Religious History of Islam in India and Pakistan* (Calcutta, 1959), 197.
36. Muhammad Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London, 1967), 23.
37. Asim Roy, 'Thinking over "Popular Islam" in South Asia: Search for a Paradigm', in Roy, Asim and Mushirul Hasan ed. *Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics* (New Delhi, 2005), 36.
38. Imtiaz Ahmad, 'Unity and Variety in South Asian Islam', in Dietmar Rothermund, ed. *Islam in Southern Asia: A Survey of Current Research* (Wiesbaden, 1975), 5.
39. Ibid.
40. Imtiaz Ahmad, 'Introduction: Understanding Islam', in Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, eds. *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaptation, Accommodation and Conflict* (New Delhi, 2004), xii–xiii.
41. Imtiaz Ahmad, 'Unity and Variety in South Asian Islam', 7–8.
42. Cited in Asim Roy, 'Thinking over "Popular Islam"', 32.
43. Anwar Alam, '"Scholarly Islam" and "Everyday Islam": Reflections on the Debate over the Integration of the Muslim Minority in India and Western Europe', in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 27, 2 (2007): 241–60.
44. Asim Roy, 'Thinking over "Popular Islam"', 35.
45. Ibid., 36; italics by Roy.
46. Francis Robinson, 'Islam and Muslim Society in South Asia', in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 17, 2 (1983), 187.
47. Ibid., 196. The usage of customary law in various Muslim communities is set aside by Robinson simply as a "matter of imperfect knowledge or temporary expedient, although temporary in this sense may well be several hundred years".
48. Ibid., 201.
49. Veena Das, 'For a Folk Theology and Theological Anthropology of Islam', in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 18, 2 (1984), 294.
50. 'Introduction' in Richard Eaton, ed. *India's Islamic Traditions, 711–1750* (New Delhi, 2003), 2–6.
51. Ibid., 24.
52. Clifford Greetz, *Islam Observed* (New Haven, 1968), 66. This is not to deny that historically there have been attempts by Ulama, backed by the power of state, to enforce a particular creed as the orthodox and only acceptable version of Islam. Such attempts to inch towards an orthodox creed only serve to reinforce the comment made by Greetz. It is because, as Alexander Knysh has shown, there is no notion of a timeless and ahistorical orthodoxy. On the basis of his analysis of Al-Shahrastani's (d. 548/1153) *Kitab al-milal wa'l-nihal* (The Book of Religions and Religious Sects) and writings of Ibn 'Arabi (d. 638/1240), Knysh has argued for a dynamic vision of Islam in the medieval period instead of the one envisioning a singular 'rigid confrontation between the supposedly immutable and comprehensive "orthodox" dogma and certain "heretical sects"'. Alexander Knysh, 'Orthodoxy and Heresy in Medieval Islam: An Essay in Reassessment', in *The Muslim World* 1 (January 1993): 63.
53. For more details, cf. Chapter 2.

54. William A. Graham, 'Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation', in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28, 3 (1993): 502 and 507.
55. Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley, 1993), 25–6.
56. But it does not mean that the Ulama have been oblivious to the charge-sheet laid down against Hadith on the account of its orality. Since modern critics of Hadith—Muslim and Western academics alike—have focused on the oral character of Hadith transmission, some Muslim scholars have tried to put forth the counter claim that written Hadith records were to be found even during the life time of the Prophet. The works of Mustafa al-Azami, M.Z. Siddiqi and Dr Hamidullah give details about the existence of written collection of Ahadith, sermons and letters of the Prophet during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and that of the *Sahaba* (Companions), and *Tabiyyin* (The Followers). These works also gives details as to how a specialized corps of scribes was at Prophet's disposal and arrangements made by later day Muslim rulers to ensure that the words of the Prophet are recorded with precision and accuracy.
57. Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, 504.
58. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London, 1986), 39.
59. *Ibid.*, 39.
60. The particular socio-political currents and historical imperatives which necessitated such a critical approach in the late nineteenth century have been discussed in Chapter 2. The context for the religious ideas of each ideologue and the movement attributed to him has been further elaborated upon in individual chapters as well.
61. Only Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi used this term as the name for all those who followed him in his religious ideas. No other group has called its followers with the same title for reasons of their own. Some wanted to distance themselves from the controversial ideas espoused by Maulwi 'Abdullah and others considered adopting a separate title for the members of a new religious group as amounting to the formation of another sect in Islam. But, by stating that the Ahl al-Qur'an is not a sect *per se* and that it encompasses much broader intellectual parameters than a simple rejection of entire corpus of Hadith literature and acceptance of Quranic supremacy in all domains of religious guidance, the scope for the distinctness of individual groups has been ensured in the present study.
62. The writings of the proponents of Hadith are of little help in the academic appraisal of the Ahl al-Qur'an ideas. It is because any degree of scepticism of Hadith, let alone an outright rejection of it, for them amounts to *Fitna Inkar-i-Hadith* ('The Mischief of Hadith Denunciation') They consider it as a conspiracy hatched by the British to undermine the Muslims and wean them away from their religion. One scholar has noted: 'In 1869 a commission was sent to India by the British to find ways to for the Muslims to be led astray. The commission spent one year here in India to collect information about the conditions of the Muslims and in 1870 a conference of these members of commission was held in *White House London* which was also attended by select Christian Missionaries. Each of them submitted their respective reports.' Dr 'Abdul Ra'uf Zafar, '*Ulum-ul-Hadith: Funni, Fikri aur Tarikhi Mutala'a*' (Lahore, 2006), 787. (emphasis added)
63. It would be of interest to note that Imam Shaf'i, in his famous treatise on the sources of Islamic law entitled *Kitab al-Risala fi Usul al-Fiqh*, has discussed various groups opposed to recognizing the authority of Hadith in matters of belief, practices, and law. Among them were a group called Ahl al-Kalam comprising of staunch anti-traditionists with a Mutazilite background who found many traditions contrary to reason and

observation and hence absurd and ridiculous. They professed to make Quran, interpreted rationally, as the only foundation of their doctrine. Schacht, *Origins*, 41–4. John Burton has used the term Ahl al-Qur'an for a group with similar ideas. John Burton, *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (Edinburgh, 1990), 22–3. Regardless of the appellation, this group comes closest to be regarded as the prototype of present day Ahl al-Qur'an groups.

64. Cf. Bibliography for details about the libraries and personal collections consulted for this purpose.
65. This lack of archival documentation on the Ahl al-Qur'an and its ideologues is unlike the information available on such figures and movements as Sana'ullah Amritsari of the Ahl-i-Hadith. There is an abundance of information in the colonial archive about the activities of Sana'ullah Amritsari and the Ahl-i-Hadith, mostly in the form of intelligence surveillance notes and reports on vernacular newspapers. They have been comprehensively used by Martin Rixinger in his work on the Ahl-i-Hadith movement in Punjab. Cf. Rixinger, *Sana'ullah Amritsari*.
66. 'Foreword' by Andrew Rippin in Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Quran: Towards a Contemporary Approach*, (London, 2006), ix. Since the present work is limited to the study of South Asian Islam, the contributions made by scholars from other parts have not been touched upon in much detail. However, it would be of importance to summarily take note of the ideas of Egyptian scholar Muhammad 'Abduh and his disciple Rashid Rida. About Hadith, 'Abduh does not explicitly express reservations regarding its historicity but insists on verifying the soundness of each Hadith before considering putting it into practice. However his student Rashid Rida, who founded a religious periodical *Al-Manar* in 1898 to serve as a mouthpiece for 'Abduh's ideas, highlighted the precedence of Prophet's actions in the form of Sunnat over and above that of his words recorded in the form of Hadith. According to Rashid Rida: 'The pillar of the faith is the Quran and the customs (*sunan*) of the Prophet which are transmitted through mutawatir traditions: these are the *sunan 'amaliya* (the applied customs), as for example the prayer ritual (*salat*) and the pilgrimage ceremonies (*manasik*), and some of the Prophet's sayings (*Ahadith qawliya*), which most of the worthy ancestors have accepted. The remaining traditions with one or only a few *Isnads* (*ahad*), the transmission of which is doubtful or which do not specifically indicate anything, are subject to independent judgment (*Ijtihad*).' G.H.A. Juynboll, *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt* (Leiden, 1969), 22–3.
67. Only Muhammad Tawfiq Sidqi (d. 1920), a disciple of Rashid Rida, comes closest to sharing these ideas though he came to publicize them a couple of years after Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's proclamation of the same. According to Sidqi, Quran sufficiently provides answers to all the problems of life and so one can simply do away with Sunnat. He holds the view that if Prophet would have considered his words divine and relevant, he certainly would have taken care to record authentic Hadith collection as he did in case of Quran. He—like Maulwi 'Abdullah—tried to derive details of *Namaz* (the Persian loan word for *Salat*) from Quran alone. However, he did not continue with such views and soon recanted under the influence of Rashid Rida. Juynboll, *Authenticity of Tradition*, 25–7.



# 2

## South Asian Islam in the Late Nineteenth Century: An Overview

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to trace the genealogy of various Sunni Muslim groups which emerged during the later half of the nineteenth century. Apart from the strictly religious concerns which inspired scholarly figures to emphasize the need for a strict adherence to Islamic religious traditions, the social-political conditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, bearing an impact in such a shift, have been contextualized. It has been maintained that the reformist discourses initiated by the scholars in the eighteenth century became increasingly more important as militaristic as well as intellectual attempts were made to bring about their enforcement during the nineteenth century. This increased importance of reformist discourses in the Islamic religious traditions has been attributed to the emergence of Ulama as custodians of Islam in the face of lack of Muslim political authority to enforce the dictates of Shari'at. What aided them in their cherished goal of reaching out to the Muslims to broadcast an 'authentic' version of Islam was the print medium. The referential works of the scholars of the past, Quranic commentaries and Hadith collections could now be mass-produced and widely disseminated. The chapter explains that the cardinal feature of this reformist Islamic tradition emphasized the centrality of Prophet and the need of adhering to his teachings and practices in minutest details possible. This helps to serve as a backdrop for a fuller explanation, in the coming chapters of the Ahl al-Quran's religious discourse which questions such a reverence for the authority of the past.

## 2.2 TRACING THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF REFORMIST MOVEMENTS

The ascendancy of European colonialism, from the late eighteenth century onwards, resulted in the subjugation of a number of Muslim populated regions. This expansive European power brought about a disruption of the Muslim's politico-religious authorities and social patterns of observances. The deterioration of political authority, in the face of mounting challenges posed to the sustenance of a polity favourable to the concerns of Muslims, was attributed by the scholars of that period to the stagnation of religious thought and the absence of strict religiosity among Muslims. There emerged various revivalist movements, claiming inspiration from these scholars, to rectify this situation.<sup>1</sup> These movements were revivalists in the sense that their agenda was to restore the perceived pristine glory of Islam, both politically and religiously, by way of cleansing its prevalent modes of practices and sets of beliefs from what were felt to be later-day accretions (*bid'at*). They also emphasized inculcating adherence to 'true Islam' among the Muslims as the panacea for their alleviation from 'decline' and 'decay'.<sup>2</sup>

The intellectual legacy of these eighteenth and early nineteenth century movements shaped the interaction of later day scholars with the impact of modernity and the changing politico-cultural milieu of the time. Consequently, the latter employed similar arguments to further the legitimization of their doctrinal basis, in order to define the contours of 'true Islam' and to propagate the idea of the need for 'reform' in the beliefs and practices of the Muslims.

The pioneering figures spearheading important trends in Islamic religious traditions during the eighteenth century included Shah Wali Ullah (1703–62), Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahab (1703–92) and Muhammad bin 'Ali Shawkani (1759–1834).<sup>3</sup> These scholars took up a contentious line of thought insofar as they opposed the practice of blindly imitating the dictates laid down by the founding figures of the four *mazahib* [sing: *mazhab*] (legal schools) in Sunni Islam, namely Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanbali.<sup>4</sup> They emphasized, with varying degrees of strictness, that it was not binding for Muslims to blindly follow the teachings of any particular legal school. Also, they contested the notion of the 'closure of gate of Ijtihad' with the coming into existence of the four schools.

For instance, Shawkani argued that the door of Ijtihad had never been closed and that *mujtahids* (learned enquirers) and theologians had lived



and researched ever since the purported closure took place. To prove his point, he presented a biographical dictionary of about six hundred personalities from earlier generations whom he considered qualified to be ranked as *mujtahids*.<sup>5</sup> This served the purpose of showing that the practice of Ijtihad and existence of *mujtahids* was a vital component of Islam in every age. On the central issue of the desirability of adhering to a particular school, Shah Wali Ullah, the ideological mentor of various Muslim movements since the nineteenth century, resorted to a syncretic approach. He dismissed the scholarship of his contemporary Ulama, likening them to 'camels with strings in their noses,' and unequivocally rejected particularism or puritanism regarding any *mazhab*. He, nevertheless, acknowledged the virtues of these *mazahib* as encompassing truth and their merits for laymen who did not have specialist knowledge of Islamic sciences to arrive at the truth on their own.

This dispute regarding 'imitation' of a particular *mazhab* (*taqlid* or being *muqallid*, with its opposite of *ghayr muqallid*) and the direct recourse to 'scriptural sources' as the preferable way to practice the 'authentic' teachings of Islam and providing a panacea for the worldly revival of fortunes of the Muslims became the keystone of religious controversies among those Sunni Muslim groups which emerged in North India during the nineteenth century.

Along with the reformatory current emphasized by the Ulama discussed above, Sufis too had initiated reform in their orders. In the case of the Punjab there was a revival in the Nizamiyya branch of the Chishti order which was inspired by the work of Shah Kalim Ullah (1630–1729) and Shah Fakhar-ud-Din (1717–1783). Both strove to reform Sufi practices and emphasize strict observance of the Shari'at and the example of the Prophet. Similarly, in Delhi, mystics of the Naqshbandiyya order, led, most notably, by Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan (1700–80) and Mir Dard (1721–85), made efforts to purify mystic practices and prevail upon members and followers of their order to follow the Shari'at more closely.<sup>6</sup> This strong interconnectivity between Shari'at and Tariqat (mystic path) was another important consideration of subsequent Muslim reform movements that emerged during the heyday of colonial power in South Asia. A good example of such a movement is the Deoband seminary that was established in 1860. It embodied in its doctrines strict adherence to Shari'at while allowing initiation into 'reformed' Sufi orders.

In frequent cases efforts aimed at religious purifications of the adherents coincided with militaristic means. This is testified by the fact that many militaristic movements were led by Ulama who had also been

initiated into Sufi orders. For example, in South Asia, such political acts of resistance, sanctified as Jihad, were led by Sayyid Ahmad and Shah Isma'il in North-West India,<sup>7</sup> who aspired to 'purify' practices of the Naqshbandiyya order to which they claimed adherence. Haji Shari'at Ullah's Fara'izi movement in Bengal was similarly founded to resist the colonial regime and bring about a change in the religious outlook of Bengali Muslims for a stricter following of Islamic religious traditions.<sup>8</sup> Such Jihad movements were equally pronounced in regions beyond South Asia. During the nineteenth century a number of Muslim groups across the globe were swept into campaigns seeking to reclaim power from foreign, 'Christian occupants'. Most important among these were, the movements of 'Abdul Qadir of the Qadiri order against the French in Algeria, Shaykh Shamil of the Naqshbandiyya against the Russians, Mehdi followers in Sudan against the British and members of the Sanusi order against the Italians. These movements, too, were led and inspired by religious figures and were not divested of ideas of reforms in Muslim beliefs and practices.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.3 SUNNI ISLAM AND THE DISCOURSE ON REFORM IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

After the abortive militaristic attempts in the form of Jihad movements to restore the political fortunes of the Muslims, the Ulama—especially those actively involved in fighting against the colonial powers—came to the realization that the absence of a central Muslim authority to oversee implementation of the Shari'at made it even more important to revive adherence to 'true' Islam among the fellow Muslims. In this regard different religious groups, which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, had their respective versions of what constituted authentic Islam. For them, adherence to that creed alone was permissible and the key to worldly and other-worldly gains. Their underlying idea was that the Ulama should serve as custodians of Islamic tradition in South Asia and guide the Muslims in matters of religious beliefs and practices so as to enable them to live their lives in accordance with the dictates of Quran and Hadith. In this way, even if the Shari'at could not be enforced from above to order the course of collective life, the Muslims could still be expected to follow Islam in their individual capacities.

In pursuance of these objectives, three main religious groups among the Sunni Muslims of South Asia emerged in the post-1857 period. The crystallization of their dogmatic stances, which took place in the later

decades of the nineteenth century, imparted a distinct identity to all three of them. Among them, the Deoband and Ahl-i-Hadith share a common ancestry traceable to Shah Wali Ullah and his progeny. They have similar views on the undesirability of local cultural and custom-based practices, such as *Urs* (commemorating death anniversary of a Sufi signifying his communion with God) and other shrine related rituals, as being an accretion to 'original' Islam. But they have dissimilar views on the desirability of following any particular school of law or Fiqh. Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan, a key figure among the Ahl-i-Hadith scholars, wrote that 'the important thing is to follow the Quran and the Sunna, not the creed of a particular man. We are neither followers of 'Abd al-Wahab nor of Muhammad Isma'il *Shahid*. For us the Quran and Sunnat are enough for proper guidance.'<sup>10</sup>

The Deobandis and Barelwis, on the other hand, are strict Hanafis who see in their preferred school of law the most perfect embodiment of the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet's Sunna and hence the ideal guide to lead a life based on Islam. The difference between Deobandis and Barelwis, then, is largely that the latter accept customary practices of mediation closely associated with the *pirs* (spiritual guides) of the shrines and the evocation of the supernatural powers and blessings of other revered figures from the Muslim past, while the former disregard these practices as an accretion to Islam.

In addition to these groups, there were those which can be categorized as Islamic Modernist. However, terms like Islamic Modernism and Muslim Modernist do not have a precise definition and can be interpreted in varied ways and ascribed to a disparate set of groups and persons as a differentiating referential from those like the Deobandis, Barelwis and Ahl-i-Hadith. In the present work, the term Islamic Modernism has been understood as an intellectual endeavour attempting to interpret Islam, in varying degrees, within the discursive framework of Western notions of humanism, enlightenment, and rationality. Islamic modernists hold the view that the 'real spirit' of Islam, interpreted by them as being essentially rationalistic, is wanting among the Muslims of the day. This phenomenon is attributed by them to the false interpretations made by the clerics over centuries. While modernists underscored the need to acquire Western knowledge for socio-political gains, they simultaneously championed the cause of bringing about an interpretation of Islam that would be compatible with the dictates of the rapidly changing world around them. It can be seen that the modernists share the same discursive space as various Ahl al-Quran groups but differ from them in that their critique

is embedded in and informed by Western discourses on enlightenment, modernity, and rationality.

## 2.4 THE EMERGENCE OF THE ULAMA'S REFORMATORY AGENCY

The emerging reformatory agency of the Ulama during the nineteenth century was influenced by and simultaneously indicative of the changes set in motion by 'modernization'<sup>11</sup> of socio-economic institutions and the concomitant dichotomization of 'public' and 'private' spheres brought about by the colonial state in South Asia. It should be noted that envisioning a dichotomy between separate domains of sovereignty within the apparatus of colonial society was not a phenomenon unique to Muslim religious reformers and the Ulama alone. As Partha Chatterjee has argued, 'nationalist' writers, intellectuals and political figures conceived the world of social institutions and practices in the domains of the 'material' and the 'spiritual'. According to him:

The material is the domain of the 'outside', of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West has proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an 'inner' domain bearing the 'essential' marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture.<sup>12</sup>

In an earlier phase, however, Indian reformers had looked to the colonial state to bring about change in traditional institutions and customs. It was only in the later half of the nineteenth century that there developed a strong resistance to colonial interference in the inner domain of 'national culture'. Chatterjee's theorization is useful in studying the dialectics of reformist currents among the political figures and religious movements in post-1857 South Asia, but is itself not devoid of shortcomings. Chatterjee partially pre-empted criticism about his conceptualization of an insular 'inner domain of national culture' by recognizing the immensely important role played by nationalists and reformers in the transformation of this national culture from traditional to modern but nevertheless non-Western.<sup>13</sup> This so-called transformation was only in relation to what was being considered as a traditional order as it was strictly patriarchal and explicitly conceived as essentially different from the 'Western' family. Paradoxically, this essentialization of cultural difference which helped

preclude the colonizer from the inner domain of national life and establishing its sovereignty over it, was being contested in the outer, material domain where claims to the universality of modern regimes of power were asserted. This served the obvious political aim of staking claims to power and overcoming the subordination of colonized middle class by eradicating all signs of colonial difference on the basis of which the colonized people had been marked as incorrigibly inferior and therefore undeserving of the status of self-governing citizens of a modern society.<sup>14</sup> Despite the explanatory safeguards offered by Chatterjee, his thesis has been put to severe criticism by, most notably, Sumit Sarkar as well as other academics. Sarkar has argued that a material/spiritual, West/East divide is classically Orientalist and is biased in the favour of elite, male dominated Brahmanic groups and individuals insofar as it denies agency to marginalized sections like women whose initiative or autonomy apparently finds expression only inside the home or at best in autobiographies.<sup>15</sup> According to him, Chatterjee's thesis is deficient in elaborating the role of women active in politics since the early twentieth century and their own initiative in moving beyond the constraints of an enlightened domesticity offered to them by the reformers and the nationalists. Ayesha Jalal, while envisioning a similar demarcation of colonial society between a 'political' public and a 'religious' and 'culturally' informed private space, does not agree with their watertight compartmentalization. According to her, 'far from eliminating politics from the realms of religion and culture, the colonial state did much to bring these spheres closer than ever and reshape them in the process.'<sup>16</sup>

However, despite its limitations, Partha Chatterjee's thesis remains relevant to the study of Muslim reform movements of South Asia when complemented with theoretical insights offered by Robinson and Metcalf. In tracing the trajectory of discourse on Islamic reform in the period following the collapse of Muslim political authority in South Asia in the later decades of the first half of the nineteenth century, Metcalf notes that the position of the Ulama in the political hierarchy underwent a shift. They were no longer an essential component of the religio-administrative setup as they had been under Muslim political authority nor could count much on the patronage of princely courts. With the formal declaration of British rule following the Indian revolt of 1857, the Ulama tended, by large, to leave desolate Delhi behind in favour of *qasbahs* (a large village or a small town)<sup>17</sup> like Deoband, Saharanpur, Kandhlah, Gangoh and Bareilly in which many of them had their roots.<sup>18</sup> The primary motive was to move away from centres of power and take the 'spirit of reform',



as it was in prevalence since the early nineteenth century, to small towns apparently unaffected by the onslaught of the colonial regime and its ways of exercising power.

As already noted, after attempts at reasserting Muslim political authority by the way of Jihad had failed to produce desired results, the Ulama resorted to an introspective mode and an inward-looking approach. It became important for them to preserve what remained of Islamic virtues and piety and to inculcate the same among individual Muslims so as to force the establishment of a 'definite' standard of faith and practice based entirely on Quran and Sunnat. This trend can be seen in the *fatwas* (religio-juristic rulings) of that period which represent a movement away from matters of rulership towards issues of individual moral concerns.<sup>19</sup> It was because the purported separation between the religiously informed private sphere and secular public sphere had helped direct the discourse of religious reform towards an enhanced focus on the private religious sphere of the individual which was addressed by the Ulama through various means of proselytization.

For this purpose the most important medium made available to contemporary Ulama was that of print. Instead of heralding the 'priesthood of all believers'—as supposedly happened with the printing of the Bible in the vernaculars during the phase of Protestant reform in Europe—the advent of print enabled the Ulama to preserve the autonomy and authority of their own distinct religious sphere. They wrote and published separately, for both a learned, Ulama audience and for the general public. The former category of works embraced within its fold commentaries—especially on Hadith collections—written in Arabic language for the consumption of a learned audience of specialists in the field of Islamic knowledge, i.e. Ulama, whether at home or abroad.<sup>20</sup> This enabled them to foster a transnational sacred religious community. The latter category of works enabled the Ulama to reach out to ordinary Muslims with epistles about their respective brands of Islamic creeds to enable them to live a life based on the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnat in a period when Muslim political power was no longer in place to ensure compliance of Shari'at laws for the benefit of Muslim society in South Asia. The medium of print was instrumental in broadcasting knowledge about Islam and its teachings and disseminating it widely for the benefit of a 'constituency' of reform built up for themselves by the Ulama in Muslim society at large.<sup>21</sup> It was also inevitably required for the working of their newly established madrasa system and in countering the polemics waged by missionaries of other rival religious groups. No wonder

then that the Ulama of Deoband were extremely grateful to a 'Hindu' publisher, Munshi Nawal Kishore, for publishing classics of Islamic sciences and generously donating a number of books for the library of the Deoband madrasa. As one historian of Deoband noted, 'for a long time it was with the help of the books donated by this one non-Muslim that the teachers and students at the Dar al-'ulum at Deoband fulfilled their religious and scholarly requirements, understood the Qur'an and solved the linguistic problems of Hadith.'<sup>22</sup>

## 2.5 THE CENTRALITY OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S (PBUH) FIGURE AS THE 'BEST AND LAST' OF GOD'S PROPHETS

For all the different Sunni groups which emerged during that period with their competing and contradictory dogmatic approaches, one theme was common: there was an enhanced focus on the figure of Muhammad (PBUH)—the Prophet of Islam.<sup>23</sup> It was not as if such reverence had hitherto been lacking. Rather it was the outcome of an implied imperative caused by changes in the social context and political power equations. An increasingly charged atmosphere, which regularly witnessed controversial religious polemics among Muslims, Christian missionaries and other religions, made Muslims ever more conscious of the image of the Prophet. More importantly, it came to them naturally to authenticate their brand of Islam with the person of the Prophet to be able to convince their followers of its genuineness.

This growing emphasis on the person of the Prophet as the exemplar of human perfection and presentation of one's Sufi, shaykh, or pir as modelled on the life-qualities of the Prophet, can also be attributed to an enhanced focus on the individual self—a colonial/capital by-product. The Prophet's 'new' image, thus constructed, emphasized a wide array of his human virtues and projected him as beloved, charitable, frugal, a lover of children, steadfast, successful and so on. This can be taken as an expression of the growing sense of the self amid a newly emerging middle-class Muslim world forced to fall back upon, and coming to terms with, its inner resources.<sup>24</sup>

In short, every single Muslim reform movement, ranging from the 'Wahabi'-minded Ahl-i-Hadith and to 'heretical' Ahmadis, and from custom/ritual-based Barelwis to '*Nechari*'—modernists—invoked the authority of the Prophet to denounce its rival group and establish its own credentials as the flag-bearer of true Islam.



The perceptions and ideas about the Prophet and his relative stature and authority assumed greater significance in the context of Muslim reform movements of the late nineteenth century. In the event his human attributes were to be emphasized so as to make him more relevant as a source and model for Muslims to follow, a backlash could not be avoided from those who were in favour of continuing with a more traditional mode of customary religious practices.

This is best seen in Ahmad Raza Khan's disputes with Deobandis and Ahl-i-Hadith groups. A religious polemic that had first been waged between Shah Isma'il and Maulwi Fazal-i-Haq Khayrabadi in Delhi in the 1820s about the possibility of God creating a Prophet similar in stature and virtues to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)—was extended well into the period following the Indian revolt and now addressed further such queries. In his enumeration of persons who said things demeaning to the figure of the Prophet, Ahmad Raza Khan—who believed in Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) being created by God from His Own light and all the subsequent creations originating there from—targeted leading figures associated with Deoband and the Ahl-i-Hadith such as Shah Isma'il, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, and Nazir Husayn Dehlawi. They were alleged to have disrespected the Prophet by believing that Satan's knowledge of the unseen exceeded that of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) or that in each of the seven worlds there were prophets like Muhammad (PBUH).<sup>25</sup>

A dispute about what could be regarded as the true practice of the Prophet was equally important and subject to great debate and controversy. The method of performing prayer in accordance with the Sunnat was one highly disputed point of contention among the rival Muslim religious groups. The Ahl-i-Hadith contended that the worshipper should recite the *Fatiba*—the first chapter of the Quran—along with the Imam,<sup>26</sup> say *Amin* aloud<sup>27</sup> and raise their hands<sup>28</sup> before going into the bowing position. On their part, Ahl-i-Hadith could cite a number of traditions from Hadith collections regarded as authentic by Sunni Muslims, to the effect that the above mentioned practices were observed by the Prophet during prayer. Hanafis—whether Deobandis or Barelwis—held the view that these practices were later discontinued as reported by accounts of the Prophet's Companions and followers. The debate involved intricacies regarding techniques of Hadith criticism, lexicographical referencing and the relative merit of various transmitters and the authenticity of their reporting of an event. Easy availability of works of Hadith and commentaries of classical exegetes due to printing facilities<sup>29</sup> made it possible for the Ulama to make use of this new material to their benefit.

Ahl-i-Hadith scholars wrote new commentaries of authentic Hadith collections to show how Hanafis and followers of other theological schools had deviated from the practice of the Prophet as reported in Hadith literature. Hanafis, especially Deobandis, responded in kind by writing multi-volume works to counter the Ahl-i-Hadith claims that Hanafis had gone astray in their understanding of the religion, especially Hadith.<sup>30</sup> The legal-theological nuisances involved can best be explained by citing from a polemic between two relatively lesser known Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadith scholars, which is reported to have taken place in 1907.

Hamid Ullah Mirathi and Ahmad 'Ali Mirathi engaged themselves in a lively argument on the issue of *Qirat khalf'l-Imam*. Hamid Ullah, the Ahl-i-Hadith scholar, made his claim in favour of the practice on the basis of a tradition in *Sahih Bukhari* which says that whosoever does not recite *Fatiha* cannot be said to have offered his prayers. In the Hadith, he argued, the rule has general application and is not specific to the prayer leader alone. Ahmad 'Ali's rejoinder and stance against the observance of this practice rested on the decrees issued by pious and most respected learned scholars like Ahmad bin Hanbal who interpreted it differently. Also, there is a Hadith to be found in Tirmizi's collection in which the narrator is reported to have made a statement that could be used to justify Ahmad 'Ali's stance on the issue. This Hadith was found by Hamid Ullah as a statement of the Companion and so could not stand as an argument in the face of a *Marfu'* Hadith.<sup>31</sup> Ahmad Ali then cited a tradition from *Muwatta'* on the authority of 'Abdullah bin 'Umar to the effect that he did not recite *Fatiha* when the prayer was being led by an Imam and only recited it while he was offering the prayers alone. His opponent found supporting evidence from the practice of 'Umar—second among the four 'pious Caliphs' of Islam, and father of 'Abdullah—whose strictness in adhering to the practice of the Prophet could not be matched by his son, to show that his practice was similar to that of the Ahl-i-Hadith. Ahmad 'Ali was again able to quote from *Muwatta'* an incident in which the Prophet seemed to have been distracted by someone reciting verses during the prayer. But a related tradition in *Bukhari* suggested that the Prophet did not bar people from reciting in a low volume or, at best, in their hearts. At the end of another Hadith in *Bukhari*, Abu Huraira, the narrator, said that someone offering prayer behind an Imam should recite the verses in his heart. Ahmad 'Ali found it objectionable to argue against the authority of the Companion. For that, Hamid Ullah searched for a reference from the Prophet himself. With some effort he was able to find a *Marfu'* tradition enjoining the believers not to recite verses during the

recitation made by the Imam but did sanction the reciting of *Fatiha* in one's heart. As his Hanafi *muqallid* opponent found it increasingly difficult to refute the Hadith evidence cited by the Ahl-i-Hadith scholar in favour of his stance, he resorted to debating the meaning of Hadith on a lexicographical basis. In his opinion it could not be maintained that one recites verses and also remains silent. Hence the restriction laid down by the Prophet in his Hadith cannot be met. This called for an explanation of the term 'silence'. Hamid Ullah referred to a Hadith from *Bukhari* in which Abu Huraira reportedly asked the Prophet as to what does he recite while he remains 'silent' in the position between calling the *takbir* and recitation of *Fatiha*. This was taken as evidence to prove that it is possible to recite and be silent at the same time. Ahmad 'Ali asked for Arabic lexicographical works to be brought to him but failed to prove that 'silence' in its 'real' meanings implies refraining from pronouncing or uttering words. With all options of his rival exhausted, the Ahl-i-Hadith scholar claimed victory for himself and his dogma.<sup>32</sup>

The above example shows that even when rival Sunni groups were engaged in disputes regarding Prophet Muhammad's virtues and the divinity of his stature, they did express their unflinching faith in the personality of the Prophet as the best role model for the whole of humanity, the imitation of whose morals, teachings and practices was vital to leading a life as a true Muslim.<sup>33</sup> Against this backdrop, the emergence of a religious discourse allowing for contestation of Prophet's authority and the historicity of his recorded words and actions and, hence, more importantly, to the whole Isnad paradigm in particular, was an important development among the South Asian Muslims.

## 2.6 AN OVERVIEW OF MAJOR SUNNI MUSLIM GROUPS IN LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH INDIA

### AHL-I-HADITH

A student of Shah Wali Ullah's grandson Shah Ishaq, Nazir Husayn Dehlawi (1805–1902) is considered as one of the persons in influencing and shaping the contours of the Ahl-i-Hadith in South Asia. He, along with Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan of Bhopal,<sup>34</sup> saw through the emergence of Ahl-i-Hadith a group with distinct views on Hadith and Fiqh, with an extensive network of Ulama spread all over South Asia but concentrated more importantly in the Punjab. This may be because many of Nazir Husayn's students hailed from the Punjab. They included 'Abdullah

Ghaznawi, 'Abdul Mannan Wazirabadi, Hafiz Muhammad b. Barik Ullah Lakhawi, Muhammad Husayn Batalawi, Sana'ullah Amritsari and Ibrahim Mir Siyalkoti. Special note should be made of 'Abdullah Ghaznawi (1811-81). Born in Qila Bahadar Khel in the outskirts of Ghazni, 'Abdullah Ghaznawi was expelled from his hometown in Afghanistan, shortly before the outbreak of the war of 1857, on the account of his heretical views. He initially migrated to Peshawar and thereafter spending time in Lahore and Delhi, finally settled down in Amritsar.<sup>35</sup> There he set up Madrasa Ghaznawiyya (later changed into Madrasa Taqwiyyat-ul-Islam by 'Abdul Jabbar Ghaznawi) which was carried on after his death by his progeny. 'Abdullah Ghaznawi had a large family most of whom were scholars. They continued to occupy an important role among the Ahl-i-Hadith Ulama all over India, especially in Punjab. Other notable students of Nazir Husayn from Punjab, like Muhammad Husayn Batalawi and Sana'ullah Amritsari, set up journals named *Isha'at-us-Sunna* and *Ahl-i-Hadith* respectively, serving as effective organs for propagating the tenets of Ahl-i-Hadith while, at the same time, engaging in polemics with their rival Muslim groups as well missionaries and Hindu revivalist organizations. Scholars like Hafiz Muhammad Lakhawi and Maulana Fayz Ullah established important Ahl-i-Hadith seminaries in East Punjab which continued functioning under the aegis of their respective successors. Another important 'family' of Ahl-i-Hadith scholars in Punjab was that of Hafiz 'Abdullah Ropri who was taught by 'Abdullah Ghaznawi. In this way Amritsar, Lukhoke (District Ferozpur) and Ropur (District Ambala) came to serve as important centres of Ahl-i-Hadith in East Punjab. In West Punjab, Ibrahim Mir Siyalkoti, Hafiz Muhammad Gaundalwi and Muhammad Isma'il Salafi set up important madrasas of Ahl-i-Hadith. These madrasas were established in the twentieth century and were set up by the students of 'Abdul Mannan Wazirabadi (d. 1916), who is said to have 'filled Punjab with his students'<sup>36</sup> and was hence referred to as *Ustad-i-Punjab* ('The Teacher of Punjab'). Himself a student of Nazir Husayn and 'Abdullah Ghaznawi, he established Dar-ul-Hadith in Wazirabad. His influence, along with that of Nazir Husayn and 'Abdullah Ghaznawi, on the Ahl-i-Hadith movement can be seen from the fact that the proposed association of Ahl-i-Hadith scholars in 1920, named the Anjuman Ahl-i-Hadith, was founded and run by the students of these scholars. They included, among others, Sana'ullah Amritsari, Ibrahim Mir Siyalkoti, Da'ud Ghaznawi and Muhammad 'Ali Lakhawi.

### DEOBANDIS

Following the death of Shah Isma'il while fighting in the Jihad movement led by Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi, Shah Ishaq along with his young brother Shah Ya'qub, migrated to Arabia. After his departure from Delhi, the Wali Ullah legacy was carried forward by the likes of Nazir Husayn and Shah 'Abdul Ghani Dehlawi Muhajir Madani—a descendant of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi.<sup>37</sup> Those benefiting from the study circle of 'Abdul Ghani included Qasim Nanautwi, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, and Ya'qub Nanautvi. These three personalities, Qasim Nanautwi, were instrumental in setting up a seminary at Deoband near Delhi in 1860. Those who studied there subsequently came to be known as Deobandis. In due course of time they developed into one of the most significant Muslim groups, centred largely in North India, taking up matters pertaining to the religion of the Muslims with great zeal. An affiliated madrasa of Deoband was set up in Saharanpur and named as Mazahir-ul-'Ulum. The founders of Deoband and Mazahir-ul-'Ulum were students of Maulwi Mamluk 'Ali of Delhi College who, in turn, had received instruction from Maulana Rashid-ud-Din Khan—a prominent disciple of Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz.<sup>38</sup> Mazhar Nanautvi had been taught by Shah Ishaq as well. Another prominent figure associated with Mazahir-ul-'Ulum was that of Ahmad 'Ali Muhaddis Saharanpuri. He undertook the project of publishing 'authentic' editions of *Bukhari*, *Muslim* and *Tirmizi*.<sup>39</sup> The availability of authentic texts of Hadith collections facilitated the study of Hadith and the possibility the use of it to argue in favour of one's own religious doctrines. It is because ever since the advent of *ghayr muqallid* thought in South Asia, it had become imperative for Hanafis to show a concurrence between Hadith and Hanafi Fiqh and to counter the claim made by Ahl-i-Hadith that the Hanafi Fiqh deviates from some explicitly laid down injunctions in authentic Ahadith.

While Shah Wali Ullah's family members were directly involved in leading the Jihad movement, all those who led the Ulama during the war of 1857 were students of his successors. The *fatwa* for Jihad against the British during the revolt was issued by Fazl-i Haq Khayrabadi, Sadr-ud-Din Azurda, Nazir Husayn and Shah 'Abdul Ghani Muhajir Madani. Shah 'Abdul Ghani's students and the founders of Deoband actively fought against the British and, for once, even took control of the small *qasbah* of Thana Bhavan. Their own followers, later on, were to continue resisting British rule and even joined hands with the Congress to this end. *Shaykh-ul-Hind* Mehmud-ul-Hasan—imprisoned at Malta following the First World War for attempting to incite a revolt against the British—was a



direct disciple of Qasim Nanautawi and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. His own followers included 'Ubayd Ullah Sindhi and Husayn Ahmad Madani, who played a major part in the events leading to the de-colonization of South Asia. Some of Deoband's famous scholars of Hadith and Quran, too, received their education from Mehmud-ul-Hasan. They include Anwar Shah Kashmiri and Shabbir Ahmad 'Usmani. Anwar Shah's commentary of *Bukhari* in Arabic is used as part of Hadith in studies in many places across the Muslim world. His own students, too, are well known for their scholarly works. They include Mufti Muhammad Shafi, Manazir Ahsan Gilani, Idris Kandhalvi, Yusuf Banori, Mufti Hasan Amritsari and Qari Tayyab.

### BARELWIS

The so-called 'split' in Sunni Islam in South Asia became evident with the publication of Shah Isma'il's *Taqwiyat-ul-Islam*—a tract that forcefully denounced the prevailing 'un-Islamic' practices among the Muslims of South Asia. Shah Isma'il's stance was challenged by Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz's student Maulwi Fazl-i-Haq Khayrabadi.<sup>40</sup> In support of Shah Isma'il, a pupil of Shah Ishaq named Maulana Siraj ul-Din Ahmad, wrote a book titled *Siraj-ul-Iman*. Another of Shah Isma'il's defendants was Maulwi Amir Ahmad Naqvi who wrote a treatise to refute Fazl-i-Haq's allegations.<sup>41</sup> In his endeavours, Fazl-i-Haq Khayrabadi was supported by some members of the Shah Wali Ullah family. Shah Makhsus Ullah and Shah Muhammad Musa—sons of Shah Rafi'-ud-Din—supported Fazl-i-Haq Khayrabadi in a theological debate that took place between him, Shah Isma'il and 'Abdul Ha'i in Jami'a Masjid Delhi in 1824.<sup>42</sup>

Scholars, other than Fazl-i-Haq Khayrabadi, who had direct links to the Shah Wali Ullah family as students of Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz, included Mufti Sadr-ud-Din Azurda, Ghulam Muhayi-ud-Din Qusuri and Shah Al-i Rusul Qadari Barkati Amrohi. Ahmad Raza Khan—one of the most important figures in late nineteenth century Sunni Islam in India who provided the intellectual basis for Barelwi Islam through his prolific corpus of writings—received his spiritual initiation from Shah Al-i-Rusul. Other than that, Ahmad Raza Khan was largely self-educated.<sup>43</sup> His ability to acquire vast knowledge of Islam and related subjects on his own is often cited by his followers as a proof of miraculous abilities endowed upon him by God Almighty to defend the tenets of the faith from such heretics as the Deobandis and the Ahl-i-Hadith who were bent upon belittling the status and prestige of the Prophet.

The Barelwis established their madrasas wherein religious education was imparted in line with the Barelwi version of Islam. This trend of setting up Barelwi madrasas started quite late in time.<sup>44</sup> This is why influential Barelwi figures like Mehr 'Ali Shah had to go elsewhere for their religious education. He is reported to have received his education in Hadith from Ahmad 'Ali Muhaddis Saharanpuri.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Fazl-i-Rusul Qadiri Badayuni, studied at Farangi Mahal in Lucknow.<sup>46</sup> Even after the setting up of madrasas, Barelwi learning centers remained concentrated largely in North India, especially at places like Bareilly, Badayun, Khairabad, Rampur and Amroha. Their construction and administration was taken up by individual Ulama. One of the earliest of such institutions was set up in 1893 at Pilibhit by Maulana Wasi Ahmad Muhaddith Surati. Many of Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi's closest followers were Wasi Ahmad's students before they arrived at Bareilly to join his circle. Madrasa Shams-ul-'Ulum was established in 1899 by Maulana 'Abdul Qayyum at Badayun. Two madrasas of great importance were Jami'a Na'imiyya and Dar-ul-'Ulum Hizb al-Ahnaf, established during the 1920s in Muradabad and Lahore respectively.<sup>47</sup> Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi also founded a school in 1904 by the name of Madrasa Manazir-ul-Islam. But his interest in *fatwa* writing and the pursuit of other scholarly activities took precedence over this teaching<sup>48</sup> and best at best he supported such efforts, and instead of taking active charge of its activities he acted as a patron by arranging for funds and donations and occasionally visiting the madrasa to deliver an address or to distribute certificates among the students. This neglect by the most prominent figure of the Barelwis resulted in the lack of a strong central institution as compared to other Muslim movements of the time. Nevertheless, these madrasas were instrumental in creating a network of personal links between the Ulama and in training new adherents of the movement.

## 2.7 CONCLUSION

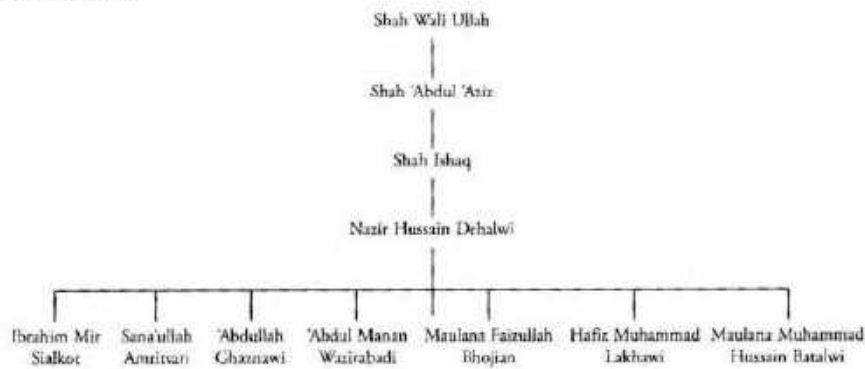
To sum up, there emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century a number of Sunni Muslim groups and individuals who attempted to inculcate the 'true essence of Islam' among their fellow Muslims. The Islamic modernists, on their part, called upon the Muslims to revise the tenets of Islamic faith in the light of modern, Western education and advancements made in the field of scientific knowledge. A difference in approach regarding the notion of 'reform' can be discerned between the Islamic modernists and the Ulama subscribing to the religious traditions



of Deoband, Barelwi and Ahl-i-Hadith; unlike the Islamic modernists, the idea of reform for these Ulama was not to make amends in the religious dictates but to 'cleanse' Islam of its latter day accretions and impress upon Muslims the need to adhere to a pure version of Islam for worldly and other-worldly gains.

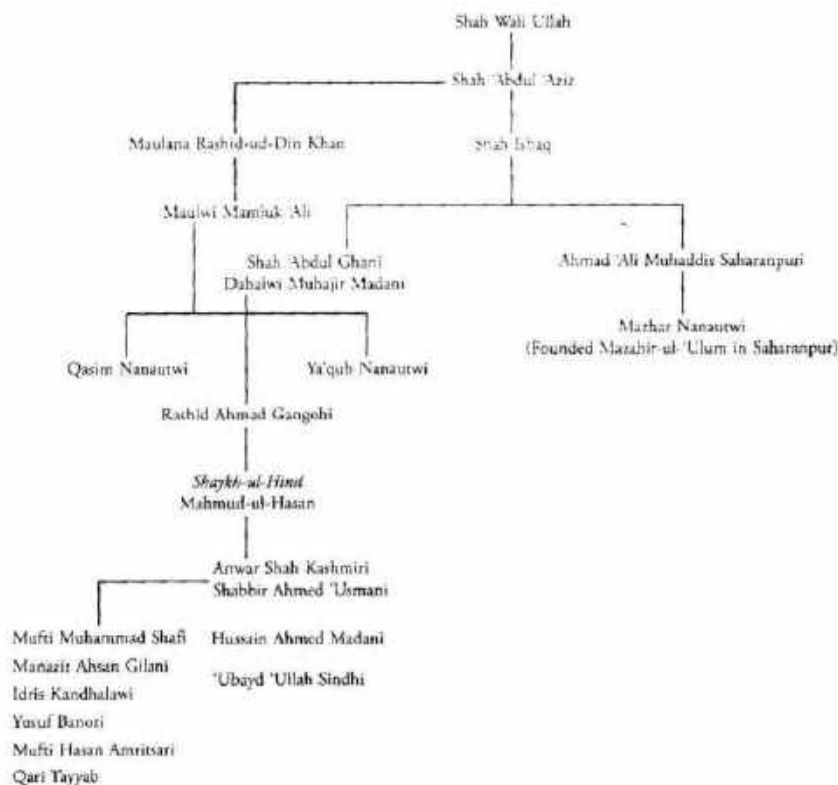
It has been maintained in this chapter that the increase in the importance and authority of the Ulama can be attributed to the lack of a centralized Muslim political authority to enforce Shari'at. Such a political-religious vacuum gave the Ulama the opportunity of serving as guides for individual Muslims in matters of faith so as to enable them to live their lives in accordance with Quran and Sunnat. In addition, the importance of availability of print medium and its impact in broadening the influence of Ulama has also been highlighted. In the nineteenth century, the spread of printing presses enabled the publication of Hadith collections and classical works of Hadith commentaries for wider dissemination. The vernacular versions of these works were now also made available. These printed works were not only vital for the workings of the sprawling madrasa network across South Asia but also helped the Ulama reach out to the common Muslim and present to him—in the life, practice and precedence of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)—the role model worthy of reverence and emulation in matters of beliefs and practices. Hence, the study of Hadith and the availability of instruction about its various branches helped bolster the role and importance of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in religious debates within the Muslim community and in their polemics with the followers of the other religions.

## APPENDIX



**Figure 2.1:** The links between Ahl-i-Hadith and the Shah Wali Ullah tradition.

**Sources:** Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti, *Tazkira Fagahat-yi Pak-ust-e-Hind* (Lahore, 1983); Abdur Rashid Iraqi, *Tiẓkirat au-Nubala' fi Tarajim al-'Ulama* (Lahore, 2000).



**Figure 2.2:** The Shah Wali Ullah tradition and its links with Deoband.

**Sources:** Sayyid Mahbub Rizvi, *Tarikh Dar-ul-'Ulum Deoband* (Lahore, 2005); *Akbar Ulama-yi Deoband* (Lahore, 1999).

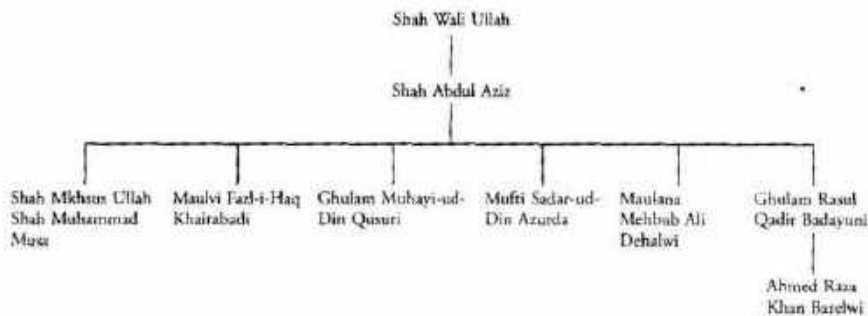


Figure 2.3: Early nineteenth century 'Barelwi Ulama' and their links with the Shah Wali Ullah tradition.

Sources: 'Abdul Hakim Sharf Qadiri, *Nur Nur Chehre: Tazkira Ahrar-i-Millat* (Lahore, 1997); *Tazkira Ahl-i-Sunnat (Pakistan)* (Lahore, 1976), I.

## NOTES

1. For a general and introductory overview of the history of that period, cf. Francis Robinson, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1996). The Muslim movements originating in different regions during that period have been introduced by Ira M. Lapidus in *Contemporary Islamic Movements in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley, 1983).
2. However, the pressures of the colonialist enterprise are not to be overemphasized in discussing the discourse on Islamic reform that began in the eighteenth century. It is because it would amount to endorsing an asymmetrical power equation 'theory' of 'impact-response' between the colonizer and the colonized in which the former appears as the instigator or catalyst for change and the latter merely a respondent. For a detailed theoretical exploration, cf. K.N. Pannikar, *Culture Ideology Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India* (New Delhi, 1995), especially Chapter 1. Also, it was not the first time that Muslim political authority was undermined or replaced by non-Muslims or some rival sectarian group. The religious polemics and contestations about such issues as *Ijtihad* and *bid'at* have always been relevant to the discourse on Islamic traditions. As Wael B. Hallaq has shown in his works, notion of the 'closure of the gate of *Ijtihad*' did not appear during the first five centuries of Islam. Even when such a notion came into wider circulation, it was not accepted unreservedly by the scholars of Islam and, in theory and practice, the closure of *Ijtihad* never took place. Wael B. Hallaq, 'Was the Gate of *Ijtihad* Closed?', in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, 1 (March 1984): 3-41.
3. For a brief introduction to the life and works of these scholars, cf. Ahmad Dallal, 'Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought', in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, 3 (1993): 341-59.
4. For the history of Islamic law and its legal schools, cf. N.J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law* (Edinburgh, 1964).
5. Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkani* (Cambridge, 2003), 81.
6. Francis Robinson, 'Ulema, Sufis and Colonial Rule in North India and Indonesia', in C.A. Bayly and D.H.A. Kolff, eds. *The Two Colonial Empires: Comparative Essays on the History of India and Indonesia in the Nineteenth Century* (Dordrecht, 1986), 14.

7. For details, cf. Qeyammudin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India* (Calcutta, 1966).
8. For details, cf. Muin-ud-Din Ahmad Khan, *History of the Fara'idi Movement in Bengal: 1818–1906* (Dhaka, 1965).
9. These different militaristic ventures in various parts of the world have extensively been studied by scholars. For example, cf. Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan* (London, 1994); Peter M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan 1881–1898: A Study of its Origins, Development and Overthrow* (Oxford, 1958); Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (Oxford, 1949). However, it should be noted that many of such movements were not exclusively targeted against European colonialism nor were they originally conceived like one. For instance, Sayyid Ahmad's Jihad Movement's primary target was the Sikh authority in Punjab. Similarly, Mahdi Sudani was also resistant to the intrusion of Egyptian influence into Sudan.
10. Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan* (Lahore, 1973), 151.
11. For the present work, I have borrowed Dietrich Reetz's definition of 'modernity' as it comes closest to indicating the changes mentioned above and which the Muslim reform movements had to grapple with. Accordingly, modernity will be taken 'to signify major epochal changes in several related fields that were initiated in the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries with the emergence of industrial capitalist societies, a social shift to the bourgeoisie and social middle classes, a philosophical discourse veering towards a rational, scientific world-view, and a political system emphasizing individual responsibility and representative democracy.' Cf. Dietrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere: Religious Groups in India 1900–47* (New Delhi, 2006), 17 fn.
12. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (New Delhi, 1997), 6.
13. *Ibid.*, 6.
14. *Ibid.*, 9, 26 and 74.
15. Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (New Delhi, 1997), 96–7.
16. Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty*, 78.
17. *Qasbahs* have been central to the intellectual life of North India, especially during the period of British colonialism. For more details about intellectual life in *qasbahs*, cf. Mushirul Hasan, *From Pluralism to Separatism: Qasbas in Colonial Awadh* (New Delhi, 2004).
18. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 85.
19. Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Contestations: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan* (New Delhi, 2004), 65.
20. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'Commentaries, Print and Patronage: 'Hadith' and the Madrasas in Modern South Asia', in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 62, 1 (1999): 80–1.
21. Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (New Delhi, 2006), 80.
22. Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India* (Ranikhet, 2007), 135. Other than reprinting the classical exegesis of the Quran and Hadith texts prescribed in the 'reading list' of madrasas, Naval Kishore press enabled for the first time in the history of Quran a mass distribution of its text. A finely lithographed Quran was printed at a very cheap price of Rs 1.8 *as* in 1868. *Ibid.*, 285.
23. In the Quran, Prophet or messenger-figures have been denoted by two Arabic nouns: Nabi and Rusul. While the noun for the role or office of Nabi is *Nubuwwah*, *Risalah* is sometimes used for the mission or message of a Rusul. This 'mission' assigned to

Prophecy in Islam is to serve as God's primary means of communicating with human kind and make them surrender to His Will, i.e. Islam. Cf. *Encyclopedia of Religion*, XI, 2. A philosophic-theological enumeration of the Islamic concept of *Nubuwwah* is best described in Shah Wali Ullah's words who believed that: 'Prophecy (Nubuwwat) is not something which could be acquired through bodily and spiritual gymnastics, nor is it inborn in the sense that the self of the Prophet has been created in such a way that he is compelled to perform actions corresponding to purity. Prophethood is on the other hand, the highest degree conferred at an appointed time.' Cited in Saeeda Iqbal, *Islamic Rationalism in the Sub-continent: (with Special Reference to Shah Wali Ullah, Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Allah Muhammad Iqbal)* (Lahore, 1984), 82. Also, 'their [that is, the Prophet's] angelic faculties are very high. They are capable of knowing things that nobody else can know. They receive revelation from above (*Mala-e Ala*). Their nature and temperament is balanced, and their conduct well intended and well meant in the highest degree.' Saeeda Iqbal, *Islamic Rationalism*, 83.

24. Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History*, 96.
25. Usha Sanyal, *Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilly: In the Path of the Prophet* (Oxford, 2005), 105–07. Shah Isma'il had said that just by saying *Kun* (Be), God could create scores of Prophets like Muhammad and angels like Gabriel.
26. *Qirat khalifa'l-Imam* is the recitation of the first Chapter of Quran at the beginning of the prayer in the standing position.
27. *Amin bil jahr* refers to saying *Amin* aloud at the end of *Fatiha's* recitation.
28. This is referred to as *Raf-i Yad'ain*.
29. Publication of such classical works of importance were undertaken by every major Muslim groups but the role played by Siddiq Hasan Khan was more prominent because of the sources at his disposal as husband to the ruling Begum of Bhopal. He arranged for the publication of Ibn Hajar's classical commentary on *Sahih Bukhari* titled *Fath al-Bari* and Shawkani's *Nayal al-Awtar*. He is reported to have had agents in Cairo, Alexandria, Beirut, Jeddah, Constantinople, and other important intellectual centres of Islam who were responsible for introducing and disseminating his own works (and those published under his auspices) throughout the Muslim world. He encouraged memorizing *Bukhari* and other works of Hadith by announcing prizes and giving out stipends. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton, 2002), 41.
30. One of many such works by the Ahl-i Hadith is an Arabic commentary of al-Tirmizi by Ahl-i-Hadith scholar 'Abdul Rahman Mubarakpuri (d. 1935), which is not only an elucidation of Prophetical traditions therein but also an attempt to expose the flaws in Hanafi law and understanding of religion. A 'representative' Deobandi response is found in Zafar Ahmad 'Usmani's 21-volume commentary titled *I'la al-Sunan* [The Exaltation of Normative Practices of the Prophet]. Ibid., 41.
31. A terminology relevant to Hadith studies suggesting a break in the chain of reporters for a particular Hadith at a critical point of its pedigree.
32. Maulana Muhammad Muqtada Asari 'Umari, ed. *Tazkiratul Manzarin* (Me'o, 2002), 1, 296–304. There are numerous other polemics to be found in this work.
33. In discussing the Tablighi Jama'at, Barbara Metcalf has coined the term 'living Hadith' which denotes that the believers should 'attempt to live by hadith but in such a way that they aspire to internalize the written/heard texts to the point that they ideally become, in a sense, 'living hadith.' Metcalf, 'Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at', in *Journal of Asian Studies* 52, 3 (August 1993): 585.
34. In terms of his intellectual ancestry, Siddiq Hasan Khan had a strong connection with scholars from Yemen. He is said to have been a student of Qazi Husayn bin Muhsin

- Ansari Khazaraḥ Yemeni, who in turn was taught by the famous Imam Shawkani. This allows the Ahl-i-Hadith to make the claim that their founding scholars have Isnad for Hadith from most reputed scholars in India and elsewhere. Firozpurī, *Tehrik-i Ahl-i-Hadith*, 532.
35. Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti, *Sufi Muhammad 'Abdullah: Halat, Khidmat, Asar* (Lahore, 2006), 282–83. He visited Amritsar twice with gaps in between before finally settling down there. During his first visit he stayed with Hafiz Mehmud in the Bagh Wali Masjid. In his later visit, he stayed in a small village just outside Amritsar. Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti, *Miyan Fazl-i-Haq aur Unki Khidmat* (Lahore, 1997), 17. According to some traditions, Ghulam-ul-'Ali Qusuri—a scholar and Imam at the Sirki Bandan mosque in Amritsar and later an inspirational figure for Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari—had given rise to controversy by giving up *taqlid*. This charged the academic and intellectual atmosphere of Amritsar with controversy and prompted 'Abdullah Ghaznawi to adopt Amritsar as his new abode for propagating and practicing his faith. Akhtar Rahi, *Tazkira-i Ulama-i Punjab* (Lahore, 1998), II, 404–05.
  36. 'Abdul Rashid 'Iraqi, *Hadith ki Nashar-o-Isha'at men Ulama-yi Ahl-i-Hadith ki Khidmat* (Lahore, 2003), 240–41.
  37. Muhammad Ishaq, an important historian of Hadith studies in India, holds the view that Deoband seminary is the culmination of the traditions and influences of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, 'Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlawi and Shah Wali Ullah. The influence of Shah Wali Ullah does not demand much elucidation. For the rest of the two, he traces the history of 'Abdul Haq and Ahmad Sirhindi's progeny: 'Abdul Haq's 'school', after a couple of centuries, had shifted to Rampur with Salam Allah al-Muhaddis al-Rampurī as his head. With the onslaught of Sikh nationalism in Punjab, Sirhind 'school' too shifted to Rampur and merged with that of 'Abdul Haq's. After the death of Salam Ullah, the head of the 'Abdul Haq family at that time, 'Abdul Haq 'school' came to an end while the head of Ahmad Sirhindi's family, Abu Sa'id al-Mujaddadi, moved to Delhi to become a student of Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz. It was, then, his son Shah 'Abdul Ghani Muhajir Madani's students who set up the Deoband seminary. In this way the Deoband seminary has links with all the major 'schools' of Hadith scholarship in South Asia. Cf. Ishaq, *India's Contribution*, 186–87.
  38. Mehbub Rizvi, *Deoband*, 97.
  39. Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti, a prominent historian with Ahl-i-Hadith leanings, makes the claim that Ahmad 'Ali was not the first person to publish authentic texts of *Sihah Satta* in India. It had started in 1842 with the publication of *Sunan Nasa'i* in Delhi. Cf. Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti, *Fuqaha'-yi Pak wa Hind* (Lahore, 1982), I, 79–80.
  40. Since the 'identities' of Deobandis, Ahl-i-Hadith and Barelwis crystallized during the later half of the nineteenth century, it is difficult to be precise, for the preceding period, in labelling someone as adhering to any particular mode of religious thinking. For this reason, Fazl-i-Haq Khayrabadi cannot be, unreservedly, described as a Barelwi.
  41. Ghazī, *Islamic Renaissance*, 203.
  42. *Ibid.*, 184–85.
  43. Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India* (New Delhi, 1996), 56. Although the Barelwis, too, hold Shah Wali Ullah and his family in high esteem and some of their own leading Ulama in the earlier part of the nineteenth century benefited from them, they do not seem to make strong claims—unlike Deobandis and Ahl-i-Hadith—of being the 'true' heirs of Wali Ullah legacy. It may well be because Shah Wali Ullah does not go far enough in meeting the Barelwi views on different aspects of Shari'at, Sufism and Prophethood. Also, the Barelwi identity was the latest to develop in comparison to Ahl-i-Hadith and Deoband. When it did finally emerge, its founding

figure—Ahmad Raza Khan—did not have among his religious teachers members or followers of the Shah Wali Ullah school except for the spiritual training that was administered to him by a disciple of Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz.

44. For details about the Bareilwi-related madrasas, cf. Sanyal, *Devotional Islam*, 70–82.
45. Muhammad 'Abdul Hakim Sharaf Qadiri, *Tazkirah Akabir Ahl-i-Sunnat* (Lahore, 1976), I, 536.
46. Qadiri, *Nur Nur Chehre*, 297. But this trend could be observed among the followers of other groups as well. It may well be because the boundaries separating these groups from each other had not been sharply defined as yet. Even otherwise, these scholars did not find it necessary to stick to just one teacher of their own religious leanings. They rather preferred to benefit from a variety of sources. For example, 'Ustad-i-Punjab' 'Abdul Manan Wazirabadi learnt Hadith from Nazir Husayn and was also for sometime a student of Mazhar Nanautwi. Similarly Muhammad Husayn Batalawi learnt rational sciences from Mufti Sadr ud-Din Azurda. Sana'ullah Amritsari, in addition to benefiting from Nazir Husayn and 'Abdul Manan Wazirabadi, was formally enrolled as a student at Deoband.
47. For brief details about these madrasas, cf. Sanyal, *Devotional Islam*, 78–81.
48. *Ibid.*, 73. When Zafar-ud-Din Bihari—biographer of Ahmad Raza Khan Bareilwi—came to Bareilly in 1904–05 desiring of becoming Ahmad Raza's student, the latter advised him to study at an existing institution, the Madrasa Dar-ul-Isha'at. It was later found out to be under the influence of Deobandis. Only then did he take the initiative for setting up a madrasa representative of Bareilwi approach toward Islam. *Ibid.*, 73.



# 3

## Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Revisionist Discourse on Hadith, 1870–1898

'I am certain that as these [Western] sciences spread—and their spreading is inevitable and I myself after all, too, help and contribute towards spreading them—there will arise in the hearts of people an uneasiness and carelessness and even a positive disaffection towards Islam as it has been shaped in our time.'<sup>1</sup>

'A time will come when a number of liberal-minded Muslims will emerge, as we have nowadays in Germany, where hardly any educated person believes in Bible to be a Book of God. And when such a time comes [for Muslims], then there would not be any problem in saying that Quran is authored by Muhammad.'<sup>2</sup>

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a detailed survey and critical evaluation of the emerging new trends and debates in the field of Hadith and other important aspects of Isnad Paradigm during the late nineteenth century. The works of the Orientalists and the activities of the missionaries, in the form of their writings and polemics, engaged the Muslims in debate on various aspects of Islamic beliefs and practices. The important questions addressed in these encounters related to the personal character of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as documented on the basis of Hadith and classical works of Arab history and the compatibility of Quranic teachings with Western notions of rationality and humanity. In this regard the role of William Muir—a colonial administrator, scholar well-versed in 'Oriental' languages and a believer in Christianity's superiority—has been studied at great length as he helped generate heated debate during that period with his biography of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). The Muslim response was spearheaded by Sayyid Ahmad Khan (and those influenced by his

thoughts) who is often credited with introducing a 'Neo-Mutazilite spirit'—the catchword in the context of Muslim history for 'rationalism'—to Islamic thought in South Asia. His critique of Hadith literature and methodology was a key component of his overall view of Islam as a rational religion capable of coping with the challenges posed by modernity. He was among the first modern Muslim scholars to express scepticism toward major portions of Hadith literature and critically question classical methods of Hadith criticism, but refrained from overtly criticising the authority of the Prophet as a religious guide for the Muslims. In aspects of life other than religion, however, Sayyid Ahmad did introduce the belief of the Prophet's non-binding authority for he considered the Prophet a fallible human prone to error in worldly dealings. This attempt of Sayyid Ahmad's to limit the scope of Hadith and mitigate the Prophet's authority to religion alone has prompted some to declare him as the first of the Munkir-i-Hadith (Denier of Hadith) and Ahl al-Qur'an.<sup>3</sup> This chapter traces the trajectory of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's religious ideas and his influence on Islamic Modernism in South Asia during the late nineteenth century, thus setting the precedence for the emergence of the Ahl al-Qur'an movements at the start of the twentieth century.

### 3.2. THE RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF SAYYID AHMAD KHAN UP TO 1870

Sayyid Ahmad Khan<sup>4</sup> is remembered as the founder of the Aligarh Muslim University which pioneered Western modes of education for the Muslims of South Asia. An equally important part of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's vision for the Muslim community was the idea of a fresh interpretation of different aspects of Islam in the light of new developments in the field of sciences and philosophy and the socio-economic and political changes impinging upon the lives of the Muslims. During the early stages of his career, however, Sayyid Ahmad was a self-professed 'Wahabi' and reposed unqualified faith in the imitation of all the aspects of Sunnat to the exclusion of those practices or beliefs which are considered *bid'at* or innovation in the religion. The 'Wahabi' ideas of Sayyid Ahmad Khan about Islam—and especially about the Prophet, Hadith, and Sunnat—underwent considerable change during the later course of his life.

A transformation in Sayyid Ahmad's religious ideas from that of a self-proclaimed 'Wahabi' to a 'Neo-Mutazlitie' bent upon opening new avenues of thought in the field of Muslim scholasticism so as to make way for a 'rationalistic' interpretation of Islam came about gradually. But even

during the so-called 'Wahabi period' of his life, Sayyid Ahmad never held ideas similar to those which had come to demonize the Wahabis as disrespectful to the Prophet or their militant extremism vis-à-vis British power. It may have been because of Sayyid Ahmad's upbringing and his family values where spiritual guides were greatly venerated. His father Mir Muttaqi (d. 1837) was somewhat of a recluse and was inclined to frequent the Sufi circles of Delhi. He is said to have been one of the chief disciples of a Delhi saint Shah Ghulam 'Ali. The same holds true for Sayyid Ahmad's mother. While the rest of her family were Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz's disciples, she alone among her relatives had great affection and reverence for Shah Ghulam 'Ali. This deep association with the Mujaddadi branch of Naqshbandi Sufis accounts for Sayyid Ahmad's devotion to the Prophet and respect for Sunnat in his early writings. Sayyid Ahmad, during this phase, seems to have held the belief that 'the essence of Islam is love for the Prophet and love for the Prophet will be reflected in following his Sunnat.'<sup>5</sup> His concern for imitating Sunnat inevitably led him to search for the 'authentic' content of Sunnat devoid of any later accretions. In other words he strongly shared the 'Wahabi' concerns about *bid'at* (innovative practices) though his criteria in this regard were much more lax than those of his contemporaries. He did not lend himself to espousing an extremist attitude towards the social norms, rituals, and cultural practices of his times. This is clearly seen in many of the tracts written by him early in his writing career.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's writing career started in 1842 with the publication of *Jila' al-Qulub bi Zikr al-Mahbub*. It was written as a contribution to the genre of *maulud* writing; a biography of Prophet to be recited at a customary gathering commemorating the birth of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In this piece of *maulud* writing, Sayyid Ahmad was critical of other such sketches filled with apocryphal stories and concocted tales and aimed to compose a short sketch of the Prophet's life devoid of all such details. At the same time he did not express disbelief in supernatural occurrences in the Prophet's life but only chose to mention those incidents for which he could find a credible reference.<sup>6</sup> *Kalimat al-Haq*, published in 1849, discussed the issue of relationship between a *pir* (religious-spiritual guide) and his *murid* (disciple). In this tract, Sayyid Ahmad opined that while it was permissible in Shari'at and in accordance with the Sunnat to attach oneself to some learned, devout and virtuous person, a belief in *pir*'s miraculous powers, especially as an intercessor in graves, was erroneous and contrary to Shari'at. In another of his earlier works, titled *Masala-i Tasawwur-i-Shaykh* and published in 1852, Sayyid

Ahmad again steered a middle course by maintaining a belief in the spiritually elevating influences of Sufism while at the same time rebutting any magical practices associated with it. His differences with the 'Wahabi' concept of *bid'at* was best reflected in *Rah-i-Sunnat dar Radd-i-Bid'at* published in 1850. In this tract, Sayyid Ahmad showed that many practices denounced as *bid'at* were in fact traceable to *Sunnat*. As Sayyid Ahmad Khan was to recall in 1879, this tract was written at the height of 'noisy and tumultuous Wahabiism', when disparate views regarding the stature of the Prophet were being expressed and debated about. On one such occasion, Sayyid Ahmad had an argument with his learned friend Maulana Sadr-ud-Din Azurda of Delhi College, during which Sayyid Ahmad burst out to assert his opinion that 'if a person does not eat a mango for the reason that the Prophet did not eat it then the Angels will kiss his feet at his [death] bed.' It was after this conversation that Sayyid Ahmad had penned this tract.

In the period from 1857 to 1869, Sayyid Ahmad Khan's religious thought seems to have gone through a period of 'transition'. During this phase he was more interested in addressing the issue of Muslim aversion to Christianity and any social interaction with Christians. His concern with showing affinity between Islam and Christianity was greater because of his aim of bringing about a rapprochement between Muslims and the 'Christian' British, rather than any apparent attempt at 'rationalizing' Islam. This gap he tried to bridge by actively advocating loyalty to the British government and by writing tracts that highlighted the common grounds between Islam and Christianity. As part of these efforts he published a tract explaining the 'real' meaning of the word *Nasara* in 1859. Reportedly a Muslim had been punished for using the term *Nasara* for Christians. This appellation was found to be derogatory by both the missionaries and the government authorities. But Sayyid Ahmad disproved such perceptions by trying to establish that the word *Nasara* comes from the word *Nasar* and it was with this name that the Christians used to identify themselves during the time of the Prophet.<sup>7</sup> Another such tract addressed the issue of whether it was permissible for the Muslims to dine with the Christians. *Ahkam-i Ta'am-i Ahl-i-Kitab* was published in 1868 and convincingly annotated with references from Quran, Hadith and Fiqh to prove that such a practice is not only permitted in Islam but also desirable. In this tract he resorted to finding alternative interpretations in order to reconcile various Ahadith that he found contradictory to his desired objective of better social interaction between the Christians and the Muslims.<sup>8</sup>

In order to further mitigate Muslim apprehensions in their dealings with Christians—whether rulers, missionaries or converts—Sayyid Ahmad Khan took up the gigantic project of writing the first, if not the only, Muslim commentary of the Bible in modern times to dispel misunderstandings prevalent among adherents of both religions regarding each other's religious doctrines. Writing a commentary of the Bible was by no means an easy task. In case of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, this task was made even more difficult due to his lack of expertise in classical and modern European languages. But he made up for his deficiencies in Latin, Hebrew, and English by employing scholars well-versed in these languages<sup>9</sup> and with the presence of various missionary groups operating in North India, there was no dearth of literature on Christianity and Church history. While most of it was available in European languages, the rest had been translated into vernaculars and distributed across India. Sayyid Ahmad did not restrict himself to the translated works alone. With the help of his team of scholars, he made an effort to read and understand the Biblical texts in their original language. For this he had to invest a lot of his time, money and creative energy on this project. The extraordinary effort that he made is clearly reflected in the book. Although incomplete (like his other books, including the biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Tafsir of Quran), this work testifies to Sayyid Ahmad's credentials as a competent *mufasssir* (exegete) with an enviably vast knowledge of ancient history, theology, geography, lexicography and other relevant exegetical sciences.

The first of the three volumes of this commentary on the Bible focuses exclusively on the authenticity of Bible's text and a comparison of Christian-Muslim views on this issue. According to Sayyid Ahmad, the Muslims believe the Bible to be a divinely inspired Book. But unlike the Quran, which is an authentic record of God's Words relayed through His Messenger, other Divine Books can only be regarded as the Message of God but not in His Own words. That Quran alone has the distinction of being the embodiment of Divine rubrics and that too in the Lord's Own Words, is a unanimously held view among Muslim scholars to which Sayyid Ahmad Khan too has adhered to. But he did not share Ulama's views on the extent of fabrication in Biblical texts. Instead he offered a new Muslim perspective on the history of compilation of Biblical text according to which the mission of Jesus was to impress upon the hearts of his apostles the subject matter of the revelations received. These apostles were divinely inspired like many other non-Prophetic figures. It was left to these apostles to 'perpetrate in writing, the inspired truths, in the idiom



and in the form of language they understood best, or with which they chanced to be most familiar.<sup>10</sup> Even though these apostles were divinely inspired, they, being mortal humans, were prone to commit errors. This is not to deny the efforts put in by the apostles from taking measures to prevent fabrications being made in the text of their Holy Books. These errors, said Sayyid Ahmad Khan, did not affect the main text and subject matter of Old and New Testaments. Only the tales and narratives to be found in these texts showed considerable differences.

The notion of a credible, if not authentic, version of Old and New Testament helped Sayyid Ahmad to account for the Quranic verses that repeatedly allude to previous Divine texts in order to convince the Christians and Jews of Arabia of the genuineness of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) claims. If there never was any authentic version of these Divine texts available then why did the Quran insist on referring to it for claiming obedience from the People of the Book? By accepting Sayyid Ahmad's views on Old and New Testaments, this anomaly can easily be accounted for. It is because in Sayyid Ahmad's opinion the Quranic word *tehrif* (forgery) does not imply a large-scale fabrication in Divine texts or deliberate omissions and additions made to it. His interpretation of the word *tehrif* is that it refers to interpolations or falsifications only in selective portions of the texts or to the ascribing of twisted meanings and interpretations to different passages.<sup>11</sup> It was to this *lower* grade of fabrication that other Holy Books were subjected to. According to Sayyid Ahmad, it was against these practices of the Jewish Rabbis and Christian Priests that the Quran had expressed its displeasure on.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's statements about Christian Scriptures and social interaction with Christians had made him a controversial figure.<sup>12</sup> Also in *Tabayyin*, are to be found instances of Sayyid Ahmad's 'Naturalist' vision of religion where he defines nature as 'the work of God, and revelation His word; that no discrepancy should ever occur between them for as much as both proceed from the same Source.'<sup>13</sup> This early streak of 'Naturalism' in Sayyid Ahmad's religious ideas is clearly reflected in his deviant views on Satan. He does not believe Satan to have a real existence other than that of an embodiment of an 'idea' of evil ingrained in human nature.<sup>14</sup> Also, he had convinced himself to believe in the very Copernican world-view he had denied in favour of Ptolomean world-view in one of his earlier tracts *Qaul-i-Matin* published in 1848.<sup>15</sup>

There cannot possibly be a cut-off date after which Sayyid Ahmad started writing about themes relating to his 'modernistic interpretation' of Islam. But what needs to be taken into cognizance is the impact of

missionaries and Orientalists to whose ideas Sayyid Ahmad was exposed for a long period of time. He was personal friends with leading Orientalists like Sprenger and Muir, and his presence in Agra had made him aware of Christian–Muslim polemics taking place in that city. He also took a keen interest in the academic output of Delhi College established by the British government to disseminate Western sciences among the people of North India.<sup>16</sup> In order to measure the impact of Orientalist–Missionary activities and writings on Sayyid Ahmad's religious outlook and ideas regarding Hadith and Sunnat, reference should be made to William Muir's controversial book on the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It was in response to Muir's book that Sayyid Ahmad was forced to radically revise his own religious views, mainly on Hadith and also on other aspects of the Isnad paradigm. This new trend in Sayyid Ahmad's religious outlook, for which immediate impetus came from Muir, lasted till his death in 1898. During this period he developed a critical framework of inquiry whereby he could project his own rationalist version of Islam, defend Islam and the Prophet from Orientalist–Missionary writings and question any such authoritative works of Hadith, Fiqh and Tafsir that impeded him from espousing his religious ideas.

### 3.3. WILLIAM MUIR (1819–1905) AND HIS 'AUTHENTIC' BIOGRAPHY OF THE PROPHET

William Muir's biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has had a deep influence on the shaping of Western scholarship about Islam and its Prophet. There were numerous other Western scholars as well as those who wrote on Islam and the Prophet and were contemporaries of Muir. But none of the other works gave rise to as much controversy and ignited such fierce responses from Muslim scholars as Muir's work did. The root cause of this controversy is not to be found solely in the details of the Prophet's life as narrated by Muir. It is because Muir, like his contemporaries, was equally prone to the influence of medieval Christian ideas denouncing Islam as an evil religion and its founder as a false Prophet of immoral character. His biography is not any more unsympathetic—than other Orientalist scholarship on this subject—in estimating the Prophet's life, character, and teachings. What differentiates him, however, from the rest, is his contribution to a scholarly approach, based upon the techniques of western historiography, with which he approached the study of the Prophet's life. The cornerstone of this approach lies in Muir's claim of basing his study on *authentic* and *original*



sources of Muslim history and religion. With access to hitherto unavailable or rare primary sources, Muir could boast of having knowledge about the real *essence* of Islam which even the Muslims would find impossible to dispute since it would be based upon those very sources that were held in reverence by the Islamic scholars themselves.

In order to have a proper understanding of Muir's *approach* to the historiography of Islam and to critically analyze it, it is important to know more about events and persons that had an effect in giving shape to Muir's designing of such a framework of inquiry.

Muir was educated in the universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Later he joined the Haileybury College and, in 1837, arrived in India as member of the Indian Civil Service. He served in several places and at different ranks and ultimately became the lieutenant governor of the important North-West Province before retiring from his official position in 1876. Deeply steeped in the British bureaucratic tradition and strongly influenced by his training at Haileybury College, Muir's worldview was affected by the ideas of cultural and racial superiority.<sup>17</sup> This, combined with his strong faith in Christianity, led to a strong sense of 'civilizing-by-Christianizing' mission for the people of South Asia. It does not mean that he supported the idea of missionary activity as a government policy in India. But he did favour the idea of British officials observing and serving their religion in their personal, non-official capacity.<sup>18</sup> This he himself did by associating himself with the Evangelical mission and its activities in India.<sup>19</sup>

During his posting at Agra in the early 1840s, Muir became close friends with Pfander (1803–68), who was one of the leading missionary figures in South Asia and beyond, with a reputation of scholarly expertise on Islam. Pfander had travelled extensively in Muslim areas, especially Iran. He was once attached to a German Mission in Russian Caucasus from where he was able to make protracted excursions to important Muslim centres like Baghdad, Isfahan, and Tehran. This influenced his views about Muslim civilization and the Evangelistic missionary methods he later adopted in India.<sup>20</sup> His most important contribution to Christian–Muslim polemics was *Mizan-ul-Haq*. The original Persian text was published in 1835 and an Urdu translation made available in 1843—five years after he had joined the Indian Mission.<sup>21</sup> In this book, Pfander, instead of essentializing Islam as evil or a heresy, adopted a comparative approach to demonstrate how Islam fell short of Christianity and the standard of excellence of its moral and spiritual teachings.

It was Pfander who impressed upon Muir the need for a biography of the Prophet in a vernacular language so that the missionary viewpoint could reach out to a wider audience. Although there were many biographies of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) available with a Christian or an Orientalist perspective of his life, they were all in European languages and hence did not serve the missionary purpose well. These biographies were either typically reflective of medieval biases against Islam<sup>22</sup> or presented an idyllic, heroic portrayal of the Prophet's life as Carlyle had done. Muir himself was not satisfied with the recent attempts made by European scholars in this regard. He found fault with both Sprenger and Washington Irving's account of the Prophet's life in his article titled 'Biographies of Muhammad for India'.<sup>23</sup> Muir was even more critical of the burgeoning volume of Muslim writings on their Prophet. The vernacular press reports which passed through his hands made him aware of a new trend of enhanced focus in local Urdu journalism on the life of the Prophet.<sup>24</sup> This new *maulud* or 'nativity' literature, in Muir's view, reflected mainly 'feverish imagination' and was thus condemnable as 'credulous beyond belief'. In this category were to be considered not only recently published *Maulud Sharif*, whose author Ghulam Imam Shahid was familiar to him from contacts in the Agra courts, but also 'late Persian' biographies like *Madarij al-Nubuwwah* and *Rauzat al-Ahbab*. They had been compiled in South Asia during the Mughal period and were currently being brought out in new lithographed editions in the Urdu presses of North India.<sup>25</sup> The fact that several editions of *Maulud Sharif* had come out within a few years of its publication showed that the 'native mind' was not insensitive to the subject of the Prophet's life.<sup>26</sup> The time was ripe for new biographies of the Prophet, based on primary texts of Muslim history, to prove to the Muslims that they were 'deceived' on many important points, and thus demonstrate that some of their stances were untenable.<sup>27</sup> This led Muir to write *Life of Mahomet* which was first published in complete form in 1861.<sup>28</sup> But as Troll rightly points out, this book was more than just a biography of the Prophet. In many instances it went beyond the realm of biography and delved into questioning Islam's genuineness as a divinely inspired religion by scrutinizing it with Western methods of critical historiography.<sup>29</sup> This was to be expected of a biography written specifically for missionary purposes. As such, its comparative study of relative virtues of Islam and Christianity within the framework of the Prophet's life and teachings tallied with Muir's pre-conceived notion of the superiority of the latter over the former. Such a belief was, for staunch Evangelists like Muir, a matter of sheer faith but

its rhetorical assertion would not have failed to register an impact on his writing. There was a need to lend credibility to what Muir planned to present as the *true* version of the Prophet's life and his teachings. This he achieved by the application of Western tools of analysis to the historiography of Islamic history and the Prophet's biography—an *approach* that has earned him recognition in the annals of Orientalist approaches to Islamic studies. It was designed intentionally with the aim of *acquiring* an *authority* to write a *true* account of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life. Once this *authority* could be claimed on the basis of access to *original* and *authentic* works of histories and Ahadith *authenticated* by Muir in the introductory essay of his book, Muir thought that he could, without fear, confront his Muslim adversaries 'with an array of hostile weapons drawn from their own armouries.'<sup>30</sup> This would allow him to find faults or contradictions in traditionally narrated accounts of Prophet's life and, most importantly, to subtly satirize various aspects of his private life. Only in this way could it have been possible to show the 'intelligent and thinking Mohammedans' the historical evidences of their faith and its lacunae as compared with Christianity. A biography devoid of these features could neither have added anything new to the expanding volume of books on the Prophet of Islam nor could it have aided the Missionary purpose in any significant, positive way. It was to this manipulation of *original* sources that Muslim apologetic response had to focus in order to pose a counter argument.

### 3.4. THE 'GREAT DEBATE' OF AGRA AND THE WORKS OF ALOIS SPRENGER (1813–1893)

At the time Muir was planning and researching for the biography of the Prophet, his work seemed to have been affected by the polemical rhetoric and academic environment of North India. In the face of high-pitched Christian–Muslim debate, Muir's belief in the need for a new *approach* to Islamic studies was reinforced even further. Not only was such an *approach* desirable but it also *appeared* possible to execute due to the progress that was being made in the field of Islamic studies. These developments were sure to have an effect on Muir's own scholarship and religious ideas.

Pfander's presence in India had brought him into contact and debate with his Muslim counterparts. The missionary zeal and Muslim–Christian polemics that ensued, reached its zenith in the 'Great Debate' in Agra in 1854.<sup>31</sup> Muir had the chance to be present at that occasion and to monitor the proceedings as they unfolded. Even before the *grand finale* at Agra,

there had been many such debates which Muir had attended and wrote about. As president of the Agra Tract Society, he had even edited an Urdu account of one of the religious debates that took place in Delhi in 1852. Since 1845, Muir had been contributing regularly to the *Calcutta Review*. In his articles, under the title of his self-coined term of 'Muhammadan Controversy', he had been reviewing the works published and the arguments made about the Christian-Muslim polemics in India.<sup>32</sup> Even with such a long-term familiarity with the issue, the spectacle witnessed by Muir in Agra had such a profound effect on him that from there onwards he gave up the idea of face-to-face challenge with rival Muslim clerics and focused more on academic writings.

One of the major themes to be discussed in the Agra debate was related to the issue of *authenticity* of Christian scriptures. The Muslim representatives for the debate, Rahmat Ullah Kairanawi, presented the oft-repeated view that the Quran was the *only* Divine Book that had not been tempered with and had come down to successive Muslim generations in original, unadulterated form. It was part of Kairanawi's charge sheet against Christianity to discredit present-day Bible as devoid of Divine origins due to the alterations made in its text in the early years of the Christian religion. Pfander, with his wide experience as a Missionary in Muslim areas, was not unfamiliar with this argument. Throughout his Missionary career, Pfander had steadfastly denied the occurrence of any alterations in any manuscript or printed edition of any part of Bible, apart from some minor, ignorable 'copyist errors' in some editions.<sup>33</sup> Avril Powell has noted discrepancies in the Muslim and the Missionary accounts of Agra Debate on the issue of *tehrif* in Biblical text and so it is difficult to ascertain whether Pfander really conceded to the Muslim charge of *tehrif* in Bible even to a minute extent or adhered to his original stance. What is more important to note here is the emphasis on the necessity of the *authenticity* of a text in order for it to be credible as a source of moral-spiritual guidance, or even for argumentation.

Muir, who did not contribute during the debate, published a treatise in 1856 titled *The Testimony Borne by the Coran to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures*.<sup>34</sup> He tried to furnish evidence from the Muslim Holy Scripture to show that the Quran too believed in the authenticity and uncorrupted nature of the Biblical text. This *approach* of using sources, which Muslims themselves regarded as *authentic*, to prove a point supportive of Christian religion and hence serving the Missionary purpose well, was similar to what Muir elaborated further into a theoretical framework as he took up the task of writing a biography of the Prophet.

Alois Sprenger (1813–1893) had preceded Muir in writing a biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).<sup>35</sup> In many ways he had more of a claim to having an access to both *authentic* and *original* primary sources. It was because of his time spent at the Delhi College which brought him into contact with the elite of Muslim intelligentsia of North India.<sup>36</sup> He was able to borrow rarely-published books and manuscripts from their private collections.<sup>37</sup> In addition to that, Sprenger had had a chance to work in the royal libraries at Lucknow and to draft a list of all their holdings.<sup>38</sup> In 1854, he took long leave and went on to tour Iraq, Syria and Egypt and was able to return with valuable books on various aspects of Muslim history and religion which he later got published in India.<sup>39</sup> It is no wonder than that Muir had to be dependent on Sprenger for many rare manuscripts and books. But given Muir's own status as a high-ranking official, it was not difficult for him to establish personal contacts with Muslim intelligentsia and procure the required material from them.<sup>40</sup> In terms of scholarly expertise, however, both Muir and Sprenger were equally learned in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu.

Sprenger had written two different biographies of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The first was written in English and published from Allahabad in 1851.<sup>41</sup> Years later appeared his much-detailed study of Muhammad's (PBUH) life in German.<sup>42</sup> In his criticism, Muir focused on *Das Leben und die Lehre des Muhammad*. It was because *Life of Muhammad*, compared to Sprenger's later work, was 'bald and meagre, and also incomplete since it stopped short at the Flight from Mecca'.<sup>43</sup> Muir's intention was not to 'review this treatise as a whole, but simply the Essay prefixed to the third volume, in which the nature and value of the materials for the life of Mahomet, and especially of Tradition, are discussed'.<sup>44</sup> In this part of his book, Sprenger has discussed at length the sources and research material bearing relevance to the study of Islam and the life of its Prophet. He classifies this material as follows: Quran; Biographies of the Prophet; Sunnat; Commentaries on Quran; Genealogies; and 'Original Documents copied by the collectors of tradition'.<sup>45</sup>

Sprenger and Muir had different views regarding the relative importance of Hadith and *Sirat* (biographies of the Prophet) literature. Though Sprenger himself was responsible for making possible the reprints of some old, classical works of Arab history and *Sirat* literature and was considerably dependent upon them as reference works—he did not accord them as much importance as Hadith. In his critical review of sources of the Prophet's biography, he concluded that 'the Sunna contains more truth than falsehood, the Biographies more falsehood than truth'.<sup>46</sup> It was



because Sprenger was generally more appreciative of the efforts made by the collectors of Hadith. But it does not mean that he approved of their canons of criticism or found them reasonable.<sup>47</sup> At best, the Traditionists stuck to their rules and followed them stringently. This could not be expected of the Biographers. These views appeared to Muir erroneous and misleading. He was willing to give more credit to the Biographers. It was because, in Muir's opinion, they were comparatively free from the biased mindset and theological constraints of the Traditionists. The *pseudo-critical* criteria laid down by the Traditionists did not apply to the Biographers and so they were able to record 'interesting narratives and valuable clues to *truth*, which the professional Collector cast aside because they did not answer to the technical requirements of traditionary evidence, or square with his own theological notions.'<sup>48</sup> Even though they too endeavoured to project a glorified picture of their Prophet, 'there is no reason to doubt that otherwise they sought honestly to give a true picture of the Prophet.'<sup>49</sup> As for the existence of legendary tales, both Hadith and Biographies suffered from same malaise, hence leaving little to choose between the two.<sup>50</sup>

With access to early Muslim historiographical material and required expertise in 'Islamic' languages, Muir claimed to approach the subject of his enquiry with an impartial mind. It was this purportedly balanced approach to the life of the Prophet, based upon the earliest and most *authentic* historical sources which differentiated Muir's work from that of the rest of his contemporaries. Or at least that was what his admirers—mostly priests and Europeans scholars—felt, as expressed in a review of his book, as part of an obituary for Muir, published in 1905. It said: '... the author always strives to be just and fair; anyone who has read the 37th chapter dealing with the character of the Prophet, must be convinced of this.'<sup>51</sup> For the present study, however, the focus would not be on Muir's overall view of Prophet's life and mission rather more on the crucial question of his handling of sources of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) biography and the canons of criticism that he formulated.

### 3.5. MUIR'S QUELLENKRITIK

Muir's emphasis on the need for *authentic* sources naturally led him to begin his book with a detailed review of different Muslim texts which he regarded as potential sources for a biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the degree of *authenticity* to which these sources could be said to be entitled.<sup>52</sup> He cites the Quran and Hadith as the two main sources



from which to draw material for tracing the life of the Prophet. In his discussion of the reliability of the Quranic text, Muir expresses the view that 'every verse in the Quran is the genuine and unaltered composition of Mahomet himself.'<sup>53</sup> The editions of the Quran compiled during the reigns of Abu Bakr and 'Usman were complete and there were no intentional omissions on the part of the compilers. Ironically, among other arguments, one of the reasons for which Muir finds the Quran to be an authentic record of the Prophet's teachings, is the fragmentary nature of its text. Had it been a forgery, it would have been better edited and composed. For Muir, incredible as it is that a text has been so faithfully preserved by the Prophet's sincere first generation followers and similar diligence has been observed in publishing it verbatim without the possibility of slightest of errors, it cannot account for anything miraculous or divine. Because the text of the Quran is found by him to be contradictory, repetitive, and often filled with superficial Arab legends and apocryphal stories, what actually makes it qualify, for Muir, as an authentic text, is the fact of its being written as though it were a patchwork of unrelated fragments placed in juxtaposition to each other.<sup>54</sup> Even his praise for Muslim efforts in preserving the text of the Quran is not without suggestive hints of tampering; the onus of tampering with the text lies not with those who were entrusted with the charge of preserving it but on the author himself. It was the Prophet himself who, during his lifetime, made several changes in the text. A number of *ayats* were subsequently changed or withdrawn altogether. For this, he finds evidence from within the Quran itself by referring to verse 2:100 which has been used by Muslim scholars over centuries to cite evidence in favour of *naskh* (abrogation) within the Quran. Or, for that matter, there are a number of Traditions to be found within the authentic Hadith collections as well. Such changes, warranted by political or other expediencies, could not have been recorded. This implies that even if something has gone missing from the Quranic text it is not due to the fault of the faithful followers. They did, to the best of their abilities, preserve the Quran 'as it was left by Muhammad.'<sup>55</sup> This served Muir's purpose well. Alterations in Biblical text, *slight* as they were according to Pfander, were made after the death of Jesus when the text was put together. But in case of Quran the adulteration had been done by none other than the Prophet himself who claimed to have received these *ayats* as Divine revelations. The conclusion could be easily drawn: Jesus's *genuine* teachings as expressed in the Bible and compiled after his death underwent superficial changes during the course of time while that of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were subject to

changes and modifications during his own lifetime though follows did well to preserve whatever was left for them by their Grandmaster.

Its worth, however, as the best guide to the life of the Prophet is recognized by Muir. For him, the Quran is 'groundwork and the test of all inquiries into the origin of Islam and the character of its Founder.'<sup>56</sup> In this view he claims to have been following the traditionally held Muslim view based upon a tradition narrated by 'A'isha, the Prophet's wife, that Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) character is the Quran. Hence, the Quran is not just an embodiment of the Prophet's moral character and teachings but also the most authentic historical document outlining the main details of his life. At the same time Muir was cognizant of the fact that, unlike the Bible, the Quran does not cover details of even the important events of the Prophet's life, let alone furnishing a full narrative of his life. For this, one needs to refer to Hadith literature so as to cull more information regarding various incidents covering the life of the Prophet.

Muir did accept Hadith as the second most important source for the Prophet's biography but he did not share the erroneously held view of many other Orientalists who, following the writings of the Muslim scholars, had come to adopt an uncritical view of Hadith literature. In his study of Hadith and its history, Muir was concerned about the need to prove its late growth and hence the need to adopt a certain method of scrutinizing the Hadith material to be able to sift genuine traditions from a vast pool of both authentic and unauthentic traditions.<sup>57</sup> In doing so, Muir did not refer to classical Muslim works on Hadith, based upon the criticism of the chain of transmitters, and contrived to formulate his own criteria. This Muslim scholarship on Hadith carried no significance for Muir. His main thrust is on *matn* (content) criticism. In that case too he fails to show much acquaintance with the works done by Muslim traditionists with regard to the grades of authenticity set for different Hadith collections and methodological framework laid down by them. It was because Muir was not concerned about the theological relevance of Hadith but only in their value as a historical source. Just like Sprenger, Muir's work, too, was based largely on Hadith and both felt the need for discriminating between 'reliable' and 'unreliable' traditions in the light of the criteria that they designed themselves. In Muir's case, what mattered to him most was to prove that the Traditions contained a large element of historical truth and to show their conformity with salient points of the Prophet's teachings in the Quran.

Muir defines Hadith as consisting of 'the sayings of the friends and followers of the Prophet, handed down by a real or supposed chain of narrators to the period when they were collected, recorded and classified.'<sup>58</sup> As for the origin and history of Hadith, Muir traces it to the conversations of Prophet's followers after his death. Nothing could have been more interesting for early Muslims than a conversation on the acts and sayings of their Prophet. Muir's account of the origins of Hadith is trivialized through his attempt to portray, and equate, the practice of Hadith narrations as some sort of a convenient pastime for the members of a 'simple and semi-barbarous race', marching from one campaign to the other.<sup>59</sup>

As Islam expanded beyond the Arabian Peninsula and embraced within its fold crowded, urban centres like Kufa, Cairo and Damascus, a need was felt for a more elaborate system of law. Up to that period, the Quran alone had been deemed to be sufficient for guidance by the Muslims. But with expanding frontiers of the Muslim empire, the need for a formal Hadith methodology arose. The Quran, with the simplicity of its text, was turning out to be insufficient in the face of unforeseen circumstances for which no provision had been made in the pages of the Holy Book. Hence, this deficiency was to be resolved by adopting the Sunnat of the Prophet as supplementary to Quran.<sup>60</sup> Tradition was now invested with a Divine Authority and brought on par with *Wahi* (revelation). This gave a tremendous impetus for collecting all the sayings and stories—real or fake—attributed to the Prophet. A new class of professional Hadith collectors cropped up who travelled extensively through the vast stretches of Muslim empire in search of Traditions. They also established their schools imparting Traditions. Pupils would take note from the lectures of their masters and learn about the strings of transmitting authorities on whose credibility Hadith reported by a compiler were judged and discussed. These elaborate arrangements paved the way for the preservation and spread, at least orally, of famous Hadith collections.<sup>61</sup> But the major part of traditions remained unrecorded till very late in the first century following Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) death.

At this point, Muir's evaluation of history of Hadith becomes important. He does not deny the possibility of some early record of Hadith from which later ones may have been copied. But, on the whole, such records must have been rare, if at all extant, and none of them have survived to this date with any traceable evidence. While a vast pool of oral traditions had come to a wider circulation, it could not have protected itself from the effects of the political wrangling plaguing Muslim polity

at that time. As the traditions were being handed down orally and rested on the authority of memory alone, their carriers could not have ignored the influence of their personal proclivities, political convictions, and prejudices. Such a problem was even more pronounced during the Abbasid period which coincided with the 'golden period' of Hadith studies as all the six authentic collections of Hadith were compiled during that time. In the Umayyad-Abbasid power struggle, it was important for both sides to cite their legitimate right to power on the basis of their close proximity to Prophet or on the basis of any tradition that extolled their virtues and belittled that of their adversaries. Not even *Sirat* literature was spared from intrusion as is seen in Ibn Ishaq's biography of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)—compiled under the auspices of Abbasid Caliphs—which lauds the Abbasid ancestry and stigmatizes that of Umayyads.<sup>62</sup> Hence, in Muir's assessment, there appears to be a causal connection between the political events of the first hundred years of Muslim history and the possible fabrication or distortion of Traditions.<sup>63</sup>

Muir is not wholly unappreciative of the tremendous efforts made by the traditionists. Much that they did is found by him as resulting from sheer devotion and sincerity to scrupulously recording the sayings of their Prophet. What he finds fault with or problematic is the so called authenticating the Isnad system.<sup>64</sup> It is because the Isnad system concerned itself solely with the assessment of the narrators of a tradition and not with the contents or subject matter of a tradition. Lack of a credible system of enquiry was, according to Muir, in line with the 'spirit of Islam' which 'would not brook free inquiry and real criticism.'<sup>65</sup> Even if there was some help offered by the Isnad system in stemming the growth of fabricated Hadith, it could only have been able to identify recent fabrications without being effective in placing the earlier traditions upon any certain basis.<sup>66</sup> In the absence of such a framework of enquiry, Muir proceeded to chalk out a scheme of his own, whereby, Hadith were to be ascertained by placing them and their narrators in their historical context and, along with their narrations, judged in accordance with the principles laid down by him.

In order to achieve this target of separating true from the false in Tradition, Muir proposed to address certain questions. His *research questionnaire* seeks to find the level of trustworthiness of the narrator and the extent to which he was possibly influenced by, or devoid of, personal interests and prejudices. He also wants to know whether the narrator could possibly have had the opportunity of knowing the facts personally. Muir answers these questions by 'considering the *Period* to which a

narration relates and then the *Subject* of which it treats.<sup>67</sup> Muir first takes up the period to which a particular Hadith refers to and checks the possibility of availability of a bipartisan reporting of that period or different events. For example, he finds Hadith accounts regarding Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) years preceding his Prophethood, and initial years after the Prophethood and subsequent persecution at the hands of the Meccans, to be faulty. His foremost objection is centred upon the partisan approach of the authors and compilers of these narrations. Since all the leading opponents of the Prophet, among the chiefs of Arabia, were dead, no one was left to tell the other version of the story. What can then be gathered from Hadith is essentially a Muslim account of events because all of Prophet's erstwhile opponents had become his allies. These newly converted Meccan Muslims could not have afforded to set the record straight as it could have been politically inexpedient. No one could have dared to speak in favour of people like Abu Jahal and Abu Lahab. What was even more inhibiting for neutrality in historical accounts 'was the sword of Omar brandished over the neck of a luckless offender.'<sup>68</sup> The same rule applies to all other opponents of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as well, with whom he had his disagreements or battles, whether they were Christians, Jews or 'hypocrites' of Medina. For these reasons, Muir finds no way to impartially verify the Muslim claims of their persecution or the extent of the atrocities inflicted upon them by the Pagans of Mecca. It is because these events have been relayed by those who could not possibly have set aside their biases in recording them for historical preservation.

Similarly, Muir has his reservations about the veracity of the reported events of the Prophet's childhood or the years preceding his Prophethood. The Prophet was no precocious child to be known to wider Meccan population. None of the reports about his early years were narrated by those who were personally acquainted with him during those years. Few, if any, of his companions were born before him. Majority of his followers were younger to him and could not have possessed personal knowledge or first-hand account of events during his formative years.<sup>69</sup> However, Muir does accept details regarding the Prophet's family background as being worthy of trust.

Muir offers a more detailed view of his ideas about the possibility of self-interest, prejudices, or selfish motives on the part of narrators in promoting certain Ahadith. This he has discussed under the heading of *Subject-Matter* of the traditions and has linked it to the second part of his *research questionnaire*.<sup>70</sup> He cites a number of reasons and examples to show the possibility of deliberate alterations in Hadith by making



omissions, additions or exaggerations in its contents. For instance, it was considered a privilege, or a status symbol, to be among the narrators of Traditions as a discreet way of showing intimate company of the Prophet. Under the same heading, Muir includes those reports in which narrators had made exaggerated claims of their toils and services rendered for Islam. What holds true for individuals' efforts for places of honour as distinguished companions of the Prophet is equally applicable to the respective factions to whom they may have belonged or had some sympathies or affiliations. That could not have been avoided because clan affinities ran so high and were deep-rooted among the Arabs.<sup>71</sup>

On the issue of miracles attributed to the Prophet and narrated at great length in many Hadith collections, Muir has summarily dismissed them all as attempts to 'glorify Muhammad, and to invest him with supernatural abilities.'<sup>72</sup> The basis of this denial is not his disbelief on the possible occurrence of miracles. As a devout Christian he had a firm belief in the possibility of miracles. But he had remained critical of miracles attributed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) so often in the *maulud* literature of North India.<sup>73</sup> One reason for that was his strong faith in Christianity according to which, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), being an impostor could not have been invested with Lord's powers of performing miracles.<sup>74</sup> Also, his denial of miracle-related Hadith is ostensibly for its contradiction with clear indications in Quran to the contrary.<sup>75</sup> Miraculous power was only one of the many stunts with which, according to Muir, Prophet's followers tried to embellish the image of their Prophet. In addition to that, they even tried to trace and link their Prophet's lineage to that of Ishmael.<sup>76</sup> This Abrahamic genealogy of the Prophet was to help make Islam's superseding claims over Judaism and Christianity. To further strengthen claims for Muhammad's (PBUH) Prophethood, it was essential to charge Jews and Christians with interpolation of their Scriptures. Traditions which raise doubts about these Scriptures are considered untrue by Muir because in his repeated examination of Quran he had 'been unable to discover any grounds for believing that Muhammad himself ever expressed a doubt in regard either to the authority or the genuineness of the Old and New Testaments, as extant in his time.'<sup>77</sup> But the lack of any Prophecy about an Arabian Prophet with Abrahamic genealogy in Judeo-Christian Scriptures was attributed by the followers to the corrupting of original texts by Jews and Christians. Concocted traditions to corroborate this belief found ready acceptance.

After pointing out possible lacunae in the Hadith literature, Muir then proceeds to formulate his own criteria for judging and weighing the



authenticity level of various Hadith. Two of his principles of Hadith evaluation are worthy of discussion: First, he gives maximum consideration to a Hadith which tallies with those facts of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) domestic or Prophetic life that have specifically been mentioned in the Quran. But at the same time he is cautious not to be complacent in accepting the Hadith without any reservations. This is because Quranic reference may itself have been responsible for giving rise to a fabricated tradition.<sup>78</sup> His second important, and more controversial principle, gives credence to a tradition which, '*from the Muslim's point of view*, would reflect unfavourably on the Prophet.'<sup>79</sup> What makes this principle valid for Muir is his assessment of contemporary Muslim Arabia as a semi-barbarous society that did not allow room for dissent or freethinking.

Muir falls short of even a brief assessment of the critical evaluation of Hadith carried out by Muslim scholars. He simply disregards their canons of criticism as being facile and thereby unable to satisfy the inquisitive mind of a historian in search of authentic sources for Prophet's biography. This utter failure of Muir to build up his criticism on any firm basis with support from any of the classical works on Hadith, is matched by his over-zealous approach in accepting the historical accounts recorded by early biographers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).<sup>80</sup> For him early biographers and historians alone provided trustworthy sources. They included Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hasham, Waqidi and his *secretary* Ibn Sa'ad, and Tabari. Not only were they scholars but also lived during the period closer to Muhammad's (PBUH) and his Companions times, and hence were in a better position to ascertain the historicity of certain traditions and the events to which they were related. All the later histories carried no authentic record and were filled with all sorts of legends and tales. In fact all the authentic material relating to the Prophet's life was already public knowledge by the time the first biographers and historians appeared on the scene. The later day historians, therefore, could not have had the possibility of adding a single source of original information.

Muir was willing to accept the reports about the credibility of these historians without much scepticism and with great naivety. In case of historians, he followed the traditionist's method of basing the authenticity on the reliability of its narrator. *Subject-Matter* or content analysis, to which Muir devoted so much attention while researching Hadith, becomes relevant for him in case of the early historians only when they narrate tales of supernatural acts attributed to the Prophet, or refrain from divulging information that could have possibly harmed the interests of the religion. A clear example of this approach can be seen in Muir's

appreciation of Ibn Hasham's work *except* when he *deliberately* skips *Qissa Gharaniq*,<sup>81</sup> even though Ibn Ishaq—on whose work Ibn Hasham's biography is professedly based upon—had clearly mentioned the incident. This can be seen in the works of the other two important historians Waqidi and Tabari who have reported this incident on the authority of Ibn Ishaq. As Ibn Hasham had deliberately omitted 'all reference to so important a narrative, for no other reason apparently than because he fancied it to be discreditable to the Prophet, cannot but lessen our confidence generally in his book.'<sup>82</sup> Similarly, in case of Waqidi, Muir does acknowledge his Pro-'Alid affiliations but still, Muir thinks that, 'there is not the slightest ground for doubting that his character is equal, if not superior, to that of any other historian of his time.'<sup>83</sup> This is in stark contrast with Muir's perception of the 'uselessness' of technical rule of 'respectable names' used by the Collectors.

Hence, Muir borrows extensively from early historians even though they, too, fail to overcome the shortcomings that Muir had identified while discussing Hadith literature. In fact, the historians did not have a stringent criterion with regard to traditions as was the case with the Traditionists. For Muir, this *laxity* of rules was the very reason for which a historian of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life could know more details about his life—even those which could possibly have been concealed by the Traditionists as a result of their biased approach. This should not lead to a conclusion that Muir clearly preferred early biographies over Hadith and attempts to strike a balance between the two sources. In his opinion, 'a judicious historian' would 'confine himself' to the early Biographies of Ibn Hasham, Waqidi and his *secretary*, and Tabari and 'will also receive, with a similar respect, such traditions in the general Collections of the earliest traditionists,—Bokhari, Muslim, Tirmidzi, ... [and others ]—as may bear upon his subject.'<sup>84</sup> This—in addition to the statement he made while criticising Sprenger's evaluation of biographical sources—clearly indicates his preference and willingness to count more upon historians than the Traditionists for his *authentic* and *original* biography of the Prophet.

With his emphasis on the primacy of Quranic text and importance of controversial Hadith allegedly maligning Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) character, Muir achieves his aim of exploiting some controversial aspects of his life. The most important of these incidents to be found in Muir's biography relate to *Qissa Gharaniq* and his description of Prophet's marriages with Zainab and Maria the Coptic. *Qissa Gharaniq* (Story of the Cranes) or the incident of the so-called 'Satanic Verses'<sup>85</sup> cannot be

directly supported on the basis of the Quran until and unless supplemented with evidence from Hadith and early biographies. By showing that this incident was true and founded on the basis of firm evidence, Muir—while working within his framework of research inquiry—scores two points. Firstly, the allegedly false and 'satanic' nature of Prophethood cannot be proved in a better manner than this incident. It also proves the fact that there have been instances of abrogation in the Quran and that too induced by the *Prophet* himself to rectify a grievous error that he had made. Secondly, it reiterates the importance that Muir gives to controversial Ahadith like these. He finds it impossible 'to conceive how the tale, if not founded in truth, could ever have been invented'.<sup>86</sup> For him 'the authorities', for whom he expressed scant regard in his criticism of Hadith literature, are too strong to be counted as fake.

Whereas the Quranic hint about *Qissa Gharaniq* may be disputed among the Muslim scholars, *ayats* regarding a crisis in Prophet's personal, marital life are clear and even descriptive. The Quranic description is then supplemented by scores of Hadith on these issues. Muir finds them true as they, in his estimation, 'malign' the Prophet and hence, in the light of the criteria laid down by him, could not possibly have been allowed a wider circulation had they been untrue. In addition to that, he finds a number of references in classical Arab histories that are favourable to the claims made by him. The Prophet's marriage to Zainab, the wife of his adopted son Zaid, has been a subject of great controversy, as has been a crisis in Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) household due to his inclinations towards his newly-wed wife Maria. These incidents have been narrated at greater lengths in authentic Hadith collections and classical Arab histories. Since these incidents are considered to be morally questionable by later day Muslims themselves, Muir—in accordance with his own methodology for the study of the Prophet's biography—finds these reports and the details therein as true and authentic. He narrates these incidents by quoting mostly from Tabari. In doing so, his subtle use of language further sensualises the details of what he considers a *scandalous* event in the Prophet's *harem*.<sup>87</sup> Muir's narration of these incidents describes the Prophet's chance encounter with Zainab during which the 'beauties of her figure' were accidentally 'unveiled before the licentious gaze of Mahomet'.<sup>88</sup> Zainab became aware of the 'flame she had kindled' and was even proud of her 'conquest'. When Zaid came to know of this incident, he was only too obliged to divorce his wife and offer her to the Prophet for marriage. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), initially reluctant to accept the offer, paid heed to Divine sanction for the marriage. He fulfilled 'the Divine behest,

and took Zeinab [*sic*] to his bed.<sup>789</sup> Another crisis in his domestic life erupted because of Prophet's indulgence with his wife Maria, which incensed his other wives especially Hafza and 'A'isha. In order to defuse this crisis, 'Mahomet produced a message from Heaven', as he had done in the case of Zainab.<sup>90</sup> There are several passages in Quranic chapter of *Al-Tahrim* dealing with this situation. The most relevant one, as translated by Muir, reads as: 'The Prophet had entrusted as a secret to one of his wives a certain affair; and when she disclosed it (to another) and God made known the same unto him, he acquainted (her) with a part thereof, and withheld a part.'<sup>91</sup>

The verse does not disclose the nature of the 'secret' nor does it disclose the names of those who were involved in this whole affair. Here, Muir's methodology allows him to turn to second most authentic source, i.e. Traditions, or, in other words, simply those traditions that are deemed *objectionable* by the Muslims when it comes to the moral conduct of their Prophet. That is how Muir is able to fill out the details of the incident in the light of his preferred Hadith and *authentic* histories. Muir made several other allegations regarding the Prophet's moral behaviour on several counts, especially for his military operations and alleged atrocities against Christians and Jews. A brief reference made above helps illustrate Muir's methodology which had to be disputed and rebutted by Muslim counter-polemics. It amply displays the fact why Muslim scholars required a methodological framework of their own in order to counter Muir's tactics. At best Muslims could have cried foul about Muir's deliberate omission of some favourable references to the Prophet and aspects of his life and for manipulating his language to make the details of certain incidents appear more controversial and objectionable. But they could not have entirely rejected the historical and religious sources from which he drew upon his biography of the Prophet. This was because Muir had used *authentic* sources to discredit the Prophet in the details of his life and teachings instead of counting on superficial tales of 'Nativity' and miracles drawn from medieval Persian histories.

It was then left for Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his contemporaries to come up with a *quellenkritik* of their own in order to evolve a historiographical framework for enquiring into the Muslim past whereby certain aspects could be retained, omitted or, most importantly, subject to reinterpretation. Muir's claim to *authenticity* could only be challenged by a counter approach to the historiography of Islamic sources. The most important, and difficult, part of this fresh perspective was to be its dealing with the designing of new rules with which to carry out *matn* analysis of

several *questionable* Ahadith. This whole new trend may have started, initially, solely to counter allegations made by Orientalists like Muir, but in case of Sayyid Ahmad Khan it became a life-long ambition and expanded further to accommodate within its ambit an effort to carry out a 'modernistic' interpretation of Islam.

### 3.6. SAYYID AHMAD KHAN'S REJOINDER TO WILLIAM MUIR

Muir's book was published in parts between 1858 and 1861 but Sayyid Ahmad Khan did not seem to have noticed it then and only started responding to its contents later in that decade. It may well be because of Sayyid Ahmad's lack of proficiency in English that barred him from acquiring first-hand knowledge about the book and its contents.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, his immediate reaction after *reading* the book was that of disappointment and shock. It 'burned his heart' to see the biased and unjust approach adopted by a scholar like Muir to malign the character of the Prophet. As a devout Muslim he took up the task of writing a rejoinder to Muir's book with a deep sense of religious obligation.<sup>93</sup> In 1869 he accompanied his son Sayyid Mehmud to England where the latter had been granted a study scholarship by the British government. Sayyid Ahmad Khan made best use of his seventeen-month stay in England, between May 1869 and October 1870, by spending most of his time in the collection of research material for his book. Not only was this whole experience tiring and time-consuming but very costly as well. Sayyid Ahmad had to hire the services of translators to familiarise himself with the content of books in classical and modern European languages. He had to pay large amounts to buy rare books and manuscripts. Some had to be ordered from France, Germany, and Egypt.<sup>94</sup> The costs were too high for Sayyid Ahmad to bear alone. In many of his letters from London, therefore, he requested his friends for loans, charities and even to sell items of his own household to raise funds for the preparation and publication of his proposed book on the Prophet.<sup>95</sup> The reason Sayyid Ahmad was taking so much pains for this book lies in his belief, as expressed in a letter he wrote to Mehdi 'Ali Khan, that: 'If I am able to publish this book of mine, I would consider my coming to London as equivalent to performing several pilgrimages.'<sup>96</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad finally succeeded in the 'mission' of writing and publishing his book in 1870 from London.<sup>97</sup> This book had originally been written in Urdu but its first edition comprised only of an English translation of the Urdu text. Sayyid Ahmad's reason for an English edition



of the book was that 'this book would sell good and the English will buy it in large number. Till now there has been no book in English written by a Muslim on the life of Muhammad.'<sup>98</sup> Also, Sayyid Ahmad thought that he might not be able to get the services of a competent translator, and that too at an affordable cost, in India as was available to him in London.<sup>99</sup> This statement is surprising considering the fact that Sayyid Ahmad had earlier published *Tabayyin* both with its original Urdu text and an excellent rendition of it in English. The same could have been done in case of *Life of Muhammad*, especially when Sayyid Ahmad considered it to be a work of great importance and had spent vast amounts of money on it. It may be conjectured that there must have been other considerations in his mind as well due to which he avoided publishing the Urdu version for several years.

That this book marked the beginning of a new phase in his religious thought was not lost upon Sayyid Ahmad Khan. Since his primary purpose for writing this book was to reach out to Western-educated Muslims who may have come under the spell of Muir's claim of writing an 'authentic' biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), he wanted to avoid controversy arising from his book so that he could address this particular class of Muslim readers. This led Sayyid Ahmad Khan to abstain from propagating more controversial aspects of his thought and focus more on traditionally held doctrines as practised and believed by the majority of Muslims. In his letter on 21 January 1870, Sayyid Ahmad expressed the concern that though he has deviated from the opinion of the majority of the Ulama on a few issues only, but even that could lead to a backlash.<sup>100</sup> It was probably this apprehension on the part of Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his desire to keep this important work free from controversy that he decided not to publish the 'original' version of the book till 1887—seventeen years after the publication of its English translation. By that time Sayyid Ahmad himself had progressed too far in his religious views to be mindful of any backlash from Ulama's quarters.

In responding to Muir's allegations, Sayyid Ahmad Khan penned twelve extensive lectures dealing with different aspects of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life.<sup>101</sup> Written primarily with the purpose of countering the allegations made by Muir, Sayyid Ahmad did not resort to a sentence-by-sentence refutation of Muir. As already noted, Muir had first outlined a list of *authentic* sources for the study of the Prophet's life and then from these *authentic* sources he had picked up information to narrate the details of his life and his teachings. To discredit Muir by challenging his so called *approach* to the history of Islam and the life of



its Prophet was, then, Sayyid Ahmad's primary motive. This is why the first essay that he wrote in London was comprised of a detailed discussion about the sources of Islamic history in which Sayyid Ahmad had undertaken a *quellenkritik* of his own.<sup>102</sup> In this section of the chapter, Sayyid Ahmad Khan's theories for scrutinizing the source material regarding the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would be discussed. It would then be followed by an exposition of the ways in which Sayyid Ahmad's findings regarding Hadith, Tafsir, and Sirat literature were used by him to rebut Muir and, later, to further his religious ideas in other fields of Muslim scholastic studies.

As already noted, Muir did point to the 'pseudo-critical' basis of Muslim criticism of Hadith literature and proceeded to formulate a criteria of his own without referring to the precincts of the Muslim Hadith criticism which he summarily dismissed as being inadequate. With no reference to the provisions of Muslim Hadith criticism, it became easier for his Muslim critics to question the validity of his own criteria. This lack of expertise in traditional Muslim sciences on Muir's part is even more highlighted by his preference for Sirat over Hadith literature and leaves him vulnerable to his Muslim opponent's claims against his proposed critical framework. Sayyid Ahmad was quick to dismiss Muir's declaration of biographers like Ibn Ishaq, Waqidi, and Tabari as most reliable and authentic for documenting the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He pointed out that there were many traditions in these books that were not worthy of reliance for want of trustworthiness on the part of their narrators or because of breaks in their chains of transmission. In Sayyid Ahmad's opinion this lapse on the part of Sirat authors was because they did not foresee that their written works would later be quoted to justify certain religious practices and would give rise to dogmatic conflicts among the Muslims. This was why they included a number of traditions in their books without being much concerned about the reliability of the transmitters.<sup>103</sup> But the Orientalists, says Sayyid Ahmad, have committed the mistake of relying on these Sirat and history books without validating the authenticity of their contents. This, they do, either with a deliberate intent to malign Islam<sup>104</sup> or because of their Christian beliefs whereby several books in addition to the main body of Biblical text are accorded sacred status.<sup>105</sup> In his commentary of the Bible, Sayyid Ahmad had dealt with the same issue. He had objected to the Christian doctrine of including in the Gospel the epistles and extraneous accounts recorded by Christ's apostles.<sup>106</sup>

In case of Hadith criticism, Sayyid Ahmad had to be careful not to be jealously protective of Hadith literature. That would have made it difficult for him to refute some of the allegations made by Muir and other Orientalists on the basis of Hadith. But at the same time Sayyid Ahmad could not endorse fully Muir's reservations regarding the authenticity of Hadith literature. So Sayyid Ahmad takes a middle course. He agrees with Muir to the extent of endorsing his concern regarding the origin of Hadith collections but falls short of sharing Muir's criteria for sifting true Ahadith from false ones. In his own work, Sayyid Ahmad Khan objects to the contents of Hadith collections by focusing on two of its aspects: (1) The veracity and extent of the authority of Hadith as *wahi ghayr matlu*; (2) Traditional Hadith sciences.

As already noted, Muslim scholars have distinguished between Quran and Hadith as being *wahi matlu* and *ghayr matlu* respectively. In his commentary on the Bible, Sayyid Ahmad had referred to Hadith as comprising of *wahi ghayr matlu*, i.e. 'such revelations of which merely the subjects were communicated to prophets'.<sup>107</sup> He took up this topic in greater detail a few years later while stating his own views on the history and criticism of Hadith literature in response to that of Muir's. To begin with, he counts three types of *true* Ahadith: (i) those in accordance with the Quran; (ii) those that explain the verses of the Quran; and (iii) those relating to matters that have not been discussed by the Quran.<sup>108</sup> In the first two points, Hadith is clearly shown to be subordinate to the teachings of the Quran. The third point, however, is suggestive of considerable Prophetic authority. In *Khutbat*, Sayyid Ahmad has tried to mitigate the extent of Prophetic authority. He admits that Muslims must necessarily comply with the sayings of the Prophet *if* it can conclusively be proven as being a Hadith of the Prophet and serves to provide guidance on some religious matter. But every saying attributed to the Prophet is neither true nor are they all related to religion. Hadith, in terms of their subject-matter, are categorized by Sayyid Ahmad Khan as: (i) those dealing with religion; (ii) relating to some particular condition; (iii) relevant to the condition of all the people; and (iv) about political and administrative aspects.<sup>109</sup> As for the first *type* of Hadith, it is incumbent upon the Muslims to follow the teachings of the Prophet. For the rest of three matters, says Sayyid Ahmad Khan, it is not religiously binding for the Muslims to emulate the practices of the Prophet. The reason that Muslims normally tend to follow the footsteps of their Prophet in these fields is their love and respect for the Prophet and a desire to earn reward for these acts of devotion in the life hereafter.<sup>110</sup> His belief in the non-binding

nature of the Prophet's authority and his personage being fallible,<sup>111</sup> makes him disagree with Muir's hypothesis regarding the origin of Hadith literature. Muir had argued that the collection of Hadith was officially sponsored by successive Muslim rulers to accommodate new and demanding political situations by 'creating' Sunnat and projecting the Prophet as infallible. Sayyid Ahmad rejects this explanation for the origin of Hadith literature because, in his opinion, Hadith collectors had no political or other vested interests to achieve and performed their task out of sheer dedication for their religion and their Prophet. According to Sayyid Ahmad this is also corroborated by the fact that only a small portion of Hadith literature relates to politics. Also, Muslims have never considered matters pertaining to politics to be within the scope of revelation nor have they considered every word uttered by the Prophet or acts conducted by him as infallible or under divine guidance. But the Muslims certainly do accord deep respect to all his acts and sayings.<sup>112</sup>

'The compliance to the Prophet's rubrics, even in religious affairs, is not as unconditional as it may appear from the preceding statement of Sayyid Ahmad Khan. One will have to take into consideration the stringent criteria laid down by him for its *isnad* to hold true. The Prophet's command could be put to further scrutiny on the basis of *darayat* or content-analysis. Such a strict criterion is warranted, believes Sayyid Ahmad Khan, by the late origin of the written record of Hadith literature. According to him, Hadith could not be written down and compiled in book form before the lapse of two centuries following the death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He traces two reasons for this lateness in compilation of hadith in book form: First, the companions of the Prophet did not realize the importance of keeping written records. In fact some of them were strictly against the practice of recording traditions. Secondly, the art of writing was still in its embryonic stages in Arabia; the Arabs relied more on their memories for recording various aspects of their history and literature.<sup>113</sup> This oral record of traditions was easy to tamper with and people did so for various reasons that varied from encouraging people to practice good deeds and virtuous acts, to attracting an audience for their own selfish ends.<sup>114</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad does admit to the fact that a few individuals in the Prophet's lifetime, out of their own volition, did indeed record Hadith but mostly it remained unrecorded. It was because many people, who had seen the Prophet and listened to him, were still alive and no real urgency was felt until the death of this early generation of Prophet's companions to record anything. With time as the necessity of recording the traditions

in writing was realized, it was felt necessary by the scholars of Hadith to devise particular rules whereby true Hadith could be sorted out and sifted from false reports. This brings us to the second aspect of Hadith studies, i.e. canons of classical criticism of Hadith literature, touched upon by Sayyid Ahmad Khan in his writings.

The most important aspect of this Hadith criticism was the *isnad* system whereby every narrator was expected to disclose the names of a continuous chain of narrators going back to the Prophet. The purpose of this system was to enable the Hadith scholars to evaluate the character and prestige of each one of the names provided in the chain of transmission so as to form an opinion on its credibility. For a Hadith to be regarded as one with reliable *isnad*, Sayyid Ahmad specified some conditions: A pious and virtuous narrator should clearly and unambiguously report the words of the Prophet without there being any gap or errors in *isnad*. All the transmitters should be known for their intellect and knowledge of Fiqh so that it can be assumed that they understood the meaning of the saying correctly and relayed it to others in a proper way.<sup>115</sup> When these traditional tests of *isnad* criticism are applied in most strict form then only five Hadith emerge reliable as they alone reach the level of Mutawatir (cf. Appendix I). Even these Ahadith do not give the surety that they have been relayed in the very words of the Prophet. In the light of these arguments, Sayyid Ahmad concluded that almost every Hadith had to undergo content analysis.

In discussing the concept of *darayat* or content-analysis,<sup>116</sup> Sayyid Ahmad expresses his dissatisfaction with the work done in this field by Muslim scholars. According to him, the *Muhaddithun* (compilers of Hadith) worked hard and with immense dedication to collect the sayings attributed to the Prophet and set rules for grading the authenticity of each one of them by developing '*Ilm al-Rijal*' (the science of studying the narrators of Hadith). But they left out the more important task of *darayat*. It was not that they did not realize its importance but rather it was too mammoth a task and they could not possibly do so in their own lifetime. Hence, the responsibility for carrying this tradition forward was left to the succeeding generations. Unfortunately, the scholars of succeeding generations revered the works done by earlier Muhaddithun to such an extent that they did not dare attempt such a scrutiny of Hadith.<sup>117</sup> Sayyid Ahmad, therefore, strives to draft his own canons of content-analysis by drawing upon the works done by earlier Muhaddithun.<sup>118</sup> The criteria he applies in *Khutbat*, for content-analysis, states that the words and style used in the *matan* of a Hadith would be examined and the content of

every Hadith shall be compared with religious doctrines and beliefs as enshrined in the Quran or reported by 'authentic' Hadith. For those Ahadith which report a historical incident, its details in the content of Hadith should neither run counter to the known details of an historical event nor should it comprise details which reason does not accept.<sup>119</sup>

In a nutshell, it can be said that Sayyid Ahmad Khan's ideas on Hadith did not entail an outright rejection of the entire corpus of Hadith. His approach regarding Hadith was novel insofar as it suggested limiting the authority of the Prophet to religious sphere alone and by opening up Hadith literature for scrutiny on the pretext of its purportedly sceptical historicity. Hence, appropriating the right to authenticate the historicity of Hadith in the light of *isnad* criticism and credibility of its contents in accordance with his own set of 'rational' criterion, and the mitigation of the authority of the Prophet himself to whom these Ahadith refer to, define the crux of Sayyid Ahmad's approach toward Hadith. Such an approach distinguishes him from the proponents of Hadith who repose almost unconditional trust in the authenticity of Hadith and authority of the Prophet and give credence to Sayyid Ahmad's importance as one of the earliest and most notable persons voicing critical and revisionist ideas about the whole edifice of *Isnad* paradigm.

### 3.7. APPLICABILITY OF SAYYID AHMAD KHAN'S CRITERION OF HADITH IN THE REBUTTAL OF MUIR'S BIOGRAPHY OF THE PROPHET

With these ideas of Sayyid Ahmad on Hadith and criteria specified by him for its critical scrutiny, it became possible for him to demonstrate their *applicability* in the rebuttal of some of the allegations made by Muir. In his narration of the 'Satanic Verses', Muir had depicted the Prophet as an impostor. Sayyid Ahmad has quoted a long excerpt from *Muwahib al-Ludniya* in which this whole event has been narrated along with the opinion of various scholars on it. This event has been reported from different sources but none of the reports have continuous chains of transmission. In the opinion of the author of *Muwahib al-Ludniya*, Al-Qastalani, this deficiency in *isnad* is covered up by the multiplicity of reports and reporters. Sayyid Ahmad refuses to accept this argument because it fails to fulfil the criteria for a reliable *isnad* and is also too explicitly in contradiction to the teachings of the Quran and mission of the Prophet to hold any semblance of reliability.<sup>120</sup> But as some Muslim



scholars, even such notable ones as Ibn Taimiyya, have accepted this tradition, so Sayyid Ahmad could not ignore it completely though his major objection was confined only to that portion of the narration where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is alleged to have recited an *ayat* in the praise of deities.

Sayyid Ahmad builds his counter-argument on the assumption that the identity of the person reciting verses in praise for Meccan gods was unclear. In one of the versions of this incident, quoted in *Muwahib* as well, these sentences have been ascribed to someone among those who had gathered to listen to the Prophet's recitation. This version of the tradition allowed Sayyid Ahmad his own *plausible* explanation, arrived at by making use of rules for content-analysis described above, for the whole event. According to this explanation, while the Prophet was in the process of reciting Quranic verses, and when he came to the phrase, 'Do you see Laat, Izza, and Manaas, the third idol of yours?', *someone* from the gathering—and *not the Prophet*—with the intention of elevating the Meccan deities, added: 'They are sublime idols, and their intercession will be of use to you.' After the recitation, the pagans prostrated along with the Prophet due to their erroneous assumption that the Prophet had come to terms with them by praising their gods. But once they became aware of the real situation, the pagan Meccans became even more ruthless in their opposition to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his teachings.<sup>121</sup>

Muir had also expressed his doubts about the Quran by referring to incidents which suggested that some of the Quranic *material* was lost during the compilation and a number of *ayats* were abrogated during Prophet's lifetime.<sup>122</sup> Sayyid Ahmad responded to this charge in *Khutbat* and continued to contribute to this issue in his later writings as well. In fact he is the first modern Muslim scholar to hold the view that not a single verse in the Quran has been cancelled.<sup>123</sup> According to him *nasikh* (abrogating) and *mansukh* (abrogated) apply to two things: first, to the law of a prophet who preceded another one whereby a later prophet could make changes in the laws vouchsafed to his preceding prophet. This *type* of *naskh* Sayyid had discussed in his commentary of the Bible as well. There he even tries to argue against the 'abrogation' of previous Divine texts, i.e. Old and New Testaments, and their 'replacement' by new one, i.e. the Quran. According to him, abrogation simply refers to the 'lapse of the limited time for which any particular law or command was given'.<sup>124</sup> The second *object* to which the terms *nasikh* and *mansukh* apply are the Quran and Muhammadan Law. Muslim jurists did apply these terms to certain verses of the Quran and Hadith, but not with the same intent as



Christian theologians and majority of Muslim scholars view them. Sayyid Ahmad explains the meaning of *naskh* in this context as:

There are to be found in the Koran, and in the sayings of the Prophet, commandments relating to one and the same matter, but under different circumstances; and, when one of those circumstances no longer remains, the commandment relating thereto does not remain in force, while the commandment which is intended to meet the altered circumstances then comes into operation, the former commandment being called *Munsookh*, and the one subsequent to it, *Nasikh*.<sup>125</sup>

This replacement takes place not because of any defect in the former commandment but because of a change in circumstances that had made that former commandment applicable in the first place. Those among the Muslim scholars, who argue in favour of *naskh*, quote sayings of the Prophet to support their argument. But Sayyid Ahmad refers to another Hadith in which the Prophet is reported to have advised his followers not to contradict one part of the Quran by another, but rather to reconcile the import of two passages as much as possible.<sup>126</sup> Sayyid Ahmad concludes his discussion of *naskh* by arguing that this *misunderstanding* may have arisen because some Muslims must have confused the *matlu*, i.e. the Quran, with *ghayr matlu*, i.e. Hadith. This led them to the wrong conclusion that certain portions of Quran have been cancelled due to their exclusion from the Quranic text.<sup>127</sup>

When it came to Muir's refutation of miracles attributed to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), Sayyid Ahmad found himself caught in a dilemma. This was due to his 'Naturist' views, Sayyid Ahmad did not believe in supernatural events. Muir, on the other hand, did believe in miracles. Both, however, were agreed on the 'flawed' nature of those sayings which had reported these miracles. But Sayyid Ahmad chooses not to agree with Muir's charge against the Muhaddithun of concocting these tales to embellish the image of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Instead of giving a direct counter-reply, he goes on to criticize 'the line of Muir's reasoning' which fails to take into account all the 'miraculous deeds' of Moses and Jesus. The notion of the Prophet's followers investing their prophet with 'supernatural attributes', due to their 'superstitious reverence', stated Sayyid Ahmad, were equally applicable to those many 'amusing' and 'invented' tales found in Christian literature.<sup>128</sup> This allowed Sayyid Ahmad to denounce the authenticity of such incidents in Islamic literature without accepting Muir's opinion of disrespect for the character and achievements of Muhaddithun.

In *Khutbat*, Sayyid Ahmad has discussed only two of several supernatural events reportedly occurring during Muhammad's (ﷺ) lifetime<sup>129</sup>: the splitting (open) of the chest of Muhammad (*Shaqq-i-Sadr*) and his Night Journey (*Mi'raj*). *Shaqq-i-Sadr* has been mentioned in Quran only once<sup>130</sup> while three Quranic verses possibly refer to *Mi'raj*.<sup>131</sup> Much of the details for these two incidents are derived from Ahadith. Sayyid Ahmad believes that traditions reporting these incidents are numerous in number but they are: 'so much at variance with each other that, not to speak of the numerous other rules by which they might have proved to be false and spurious, the mere fact of their so manifestly contradicting one another nullifies them altogether.'<sup>132</sup> He simply quotes the text of these traditions to make his point. In Hali's opinion it was with regard to these two incidents that Sayyid Ahmad's view in *Khutbat* was considerably at variance with the rest of the Muslims.<sup>133</sup> The reason why Hali did not cite Sayyid Ahmad's views on Hadith, as expressed in *Khutbat* to be objectionable, was that in the following decades Sayyid Ahmad went even further in his criticism of Hadith literature and laid down even more stringent rules for validating a particular saying as being attributed to the Prophet. Only then did his views on Hadith become explicit enough to provoke a reaction leading to a charge of being a Munkir-i-Hadith (denier of Hadith).

### 3.8. SAYYID AHMAD KHAN'S CRITIQUE OF HADITH AFTER 1870

In *Khutbat*, Sayyid Ahmad expressed his satisfaction with the works done by Muhaddithun in the field of *isnad* criticism but, at the same time, emphasized the need for subjecting Ahadith to the rigours of *darayat*. In articles written shortly after his return from England,<sup>134</sup> Sayyid Ahmad did not debate much on the topic of the Prophet's authority and its limitations. He was more concerned in convincing the Muslims that not every Hadith attributed to the Prophet were *actually* his sayings. For him, there were two reasons to hold such a belief: firstly, the reports had been narrated orally and could not have been transmitted from one narrator to the other in exactly the same words; secondly, the fact that leading Muslim Ulama had found it necessary to set rules for differentiating between different Ahadith, was a proof in itself that they had not blindly accepted every reported saying of the Prophet as being actually his. In this regard he refers to Shah Wali Ullah's categorization of Hadith books according to their level of authenticity and the criteria set by Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz to

sort out fabricated traditions.<sup>135</sup> As Sayyid Ahmad considered it 'utterly disrespectful and enmity of Islam to accept every Hadith as the Prophet's saying',<sup>136</sup> he found it necessary to lay down rules according to which the status of a particular saying could be ascertained. In doing so, Sayyid Ahmad gave *usul-i-hafizana* (seven rules), some of which he had already coined in *Khutbat*. The additions that he made to his earlier rules excluded some additional *types* of sayings. In these 'rules' he again emphasized the need of compatibility with 'rationality' and credibility of evidence for the acceptance of a Hadith as being authentic.<sup>137</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad drafted these rules ostensibly to ensure that Muslims accorded due respect to only those sayings which could definitely be proved to have been uttered by the Prophet. But his approach toward Hadith was considered, even by his contemporaries, as tantamount to denying the importance or relevance of Hadith by discarding them as un-authentic. 'Ali Bakhsh Khan's treatise *Ta'id-ul-Islam*, written against Sayyid Ahmad's religious dogmas charged him of denying the authenticity of all the Hadith and, by extension, from the need of following Sunnat.<sup>138</sup> 'Ali Bakhsh's assessment of Sayyid Ahmad's religious views was faulty because he neither took into cognizance latter's criteria for accepting a Hadith as genuine nor did he refer to Sayyid Ahmad's differentiation of religious and temporal, to limit the sphere of the Prophet's authority in the latter sphere only. In response, Sayyid Ahmad asserted that he did not deny *all* Hadith as un-authentic, as could be seen in his own works where he alluded to dozens of Hadith which he found to be true in terms of their *isnad* and *darayat*. Sayyid Ahmad believed that his views on Hadith were different from the rest only to the extent that he regarded *khabr-i-wahid* (single reports) as *mufid-i-zann* (conjecturally useful) and not *mufid-i-yaqin* (positively useful).<sup>139</sup> But the fact that the bulk of the Hadith literature comprises of such single reports leaves almost the entire corpus of Hadith open to revision and re-scrutiny.

A more sound criticism of Sayyid Ahmad's Hadith studies was made by Muhammad Husayn Batalawi—famous Ahl-i-Hadith scholar from Punjab and editor of *Isha'at-us-Sunna*. Batalawi's most potent arguments were with regard to *riwayat bi'l ma'na* (transmission of Hadith not in the Prophet's exact words but those of the transmitter) and categories of 'weak' Ahadith on the basis of which Sayyid Ahmad had built his arguments against major portions of Hadith literature. In his opinion, Sayyid Ahmad was wrong in saying that all Ulama and Muhaddithun unproblematically accepted *riwayat bi'l ma'na*. At the most they made the provision that those well-versed in Hadith studies and familiar with its various aspects—

like the Companions, Followers of the Companions or the best among the Muhaddithun—were allowed to simply narrate the gist of the meaning of a tradition rather than communicate it in exact words. Even though the rule was relaxed it was only rarely resorted to. This is the reason why numerous traditions to be found in dozens of Hadith books on the authority of hundreds of different transmitters all have the same words.<sup>140</sup> The Muhaddithun did categorize Hadith on the basis of relative 'strength' or 'weakness' in their *isnad*—most types of which had been referred by Sayyid Ahmad in his articles—but it did not mean that even the authentic Hadith collections were filled with such traditions as Sayyid Ahmad had been trying to show.<sup>141</sup> Due to the presence of such unauthentic Ahadith, Sayyid Ahmad had proceeded to formulate his *usul-i-hafizana* which, Batalawi contends, were not suitable for *darayat* in the first place and, at best, could be regarded as rules for *riwayat* (narration). In case these rules were applied to *darayat*, it would result in accepting all traditions whose subject matter was virtuous, 'unobjectionable' and in conformity with Quranic teachings, even if they were not sayings of the Prophet.<sup>142</sup> Batalawi is less convincing on the question of possible incongruities between the Quran and Hadith. In Batalawi's opinion such a situation arises due to misunderstanding of the meaning of a Hadith for its 'real' meanings are always exactly in accordance with the Quran.<sup>143</sup> Muhammad Qasim Nanautwi, too, expressed similar opinions on the issue of comparison of Hadith contents with Quranic teachings and rational sciences. In the latter case, he was clearly of the view that preference was to be given to Hadith and not to reason. At best one could make arguments conforming the meanings of Hadith to that of reason though, in that case too, the argument could not be stretched beyond certain limits to make the accommodation possible. In case of the Quran the very existence of incongruity between the Quran and Hadith implied the latter to be a later fabrication. But the question of such a contradiction was to be left to those well-versed in the Quran, Hadith and with 'true' knowledge of the nature of differences between the two.<sup>144</sup> It was not appropriate, he stated, for him or for Sayyid Ahmad Khan to attempt such a demanding undertaking. Hence, both the Hanafis and *ghayr muqallids*, represented by Nanautwi and Batalawi respectively, dismissed Sayyid Ahmad's rationale for making additions in the classical canons of Hadith criticism based on his reservations about the contradictions to be found between the Quran and Hadith and modernity.

Sayyid Ahmad faced opposition for his views on Hadith not just from Ulama but also from his close associates. *Muhsin-ul-Mulk* Mehdi 'Ali Khan

asked Sayyid Ahmad in a letter to 'advertise clearly that no Hadith is worthy of acceptance.'<sup>145</sup> Mushtaq Husayn, popularly known by his title-name *Waqar-ul-Mulk*, advised Sayyid Ahmad to stop publishing controversial articles as it could affect the campaign to collect donations for the proposed madrasa in Aligarh.<sup>146</sup> Even after the persuasions of Mehdi 'Ali Khan and Mushtaq Husayn, Sayyid Ahmad wrote articles in which he declared false all those traditions which prophesise the advent of Mehdi—an eschatological figure set to appear towards the end of times. In this article he did not set new rules and just summarily dismissed all the traditions relating to it. But in denying this tradition he seems to have retracted his previous stance and acceded to that of Muir's that all such traditions were concocted with the political end of securing power for the Abbasids or Fatimids.<sup>147</sup>

In his essay in 1896—and which was also his last statement on Hadith—Sayyid Ahmad cited his other main reason for paying more attention to *darayat*. He referred to the objections of Islam's opponents that Muslims accepted traditions which they found suitable for bolstering their faith and set aside those which were contrary to Quranic teachings, rationality, historical accounts and depicted Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in any negative manner whatsoever. Sayyid Ahmad, too, had identified such an attitude on the part of Muslims.<sup>148</sup> Yet, he justified the Muslims' practice of accepting or rejecting the traditions from the same narrator or book of Hadith as long as it was carried out on the basis of some criteria. For this purpose Sayyid Ahmad presented another list of rules for evaluation of Hadith literature. In this list he included at least two of the factors that Muir too had cited. He agreed with Muir that a few of the transmitters deliberately narrated such traditions which reflected the glory of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a Prophet while some others simply *became* narrators so as to gain prestige and respect for themselves.<sup>149</sup> The other rules specified by Sayyid Ahmad had already been used by him in *Khutbat* with additional changes made to them when he had listed *usul-i-haftigana* in one of his essays. Two 'new' principles introduced by Sayyid Ahmad rejected any tradition that praised the virtues of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) or disparaged his character because the former might be reflective of his Companion's inner feelings for the Prophet, and the latter an invention of the hypocrites. For Sayyid Ahmad, it was reasonable to reject such a tradition if one were to accept the belief that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the most virtuous and noble of all human beings.



Sayyid Ahmad's rules of *darayat*, on the basis of which a Hadith is to be scrutinized, are open-ended statements with wide-ranging interpretations. They can be best understood when applied in a given context. Also, much of it is derived from the works of classical traditionists. The originality of Sayyid Ahmad's contribution, hence, lies in his bold insistence on overcoming the inhibitions in place on questioning the established authorities and precedents accepted as valid, and the ingenuity with which he put these principles of Hadith criticism to use. This 'application' of the rules is best seen in Sayyid Ahmad's Tafsir. For an exegesis of the Quran, Sayyid Ahmad did not have to coin new rules for Hadith criticism though he did formulate his *usul-i-tafsir* (principles of exegesis) and emphasized the need for giving up adherence to the works of early commentators and to devise instead new principles in order to meet the requirements of the modern age.<sup>150</sup> The criteria for Hadith already laid down by him enabled Sayyid Ahmad to discard any Hadith cited for the interpretation of some particular verse for its inconsistency with internal evidence from the Quran, rational thought and verified historical events. Also, in his exegetical essays, he did not accept any Hadith that went against reason by reporting supernatural events, especially when it came to dealing with *qissas*. It was because one of the major themes of Sayyid Ahmad's Tafsir was the interpreting of Quranic stories in terms of natural causation to prove that none of these stories narrated any supernatural phenomena.

As for the two of his latest 'rules' of *darayat*, Sayyid Ahmad, in his last writings on Islam dealing with the controversies surrounding Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) wives, demonstrated their application as he rejected all the narratives regarding the Prophet's marriage to Zainab described by Muir in a titillating manner.<sup>151</sup>

### 3.9. HADITH CRITICISM AFTER SAYYID AHMAD KHAN

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's critical approach towards the works of those Muhaddithun and commentators, which had long been considered worthy of respect and *taglid* by Muslim scholars, laid down a foundation for further scrutiny of various aspects of the Isnad paradigm not just by Sayyid Ahmad himself but other Muslim scholars as well. At the time Sayyid Ahmad began to contribute towards this topic. There was little literature available in Urdu on the subject of critical re-evaluation of Hadith. Later during his career, however, some other scholars too started sharing, and publishing, similar concerns. Altaf Husayn Hali (1837–



1914), a noted poet and critic and one of the most important associates of Sayyid Ahmad's 'Aligarh Movement', concurred with some of these ideas on Hadith. He, too, believed in differentiating between the Prophet's sayings as ones dealing with his role as a Prophet, and ones relating to his personal likes and dislikes.<sup>152</sup> Like Sayyid Ahmad, he referred to Shah Wali Ullah's views in this regard to support his argument.

Hali avoided taking up content analysis of traditions or setting rules for this purpose. But he indirectly agreed to the utility of such a venture by citing evidence from the works of classical Muhaddithun to prove that a number of 'weak' and fabricated traditions did become part of the general body of Ahadith and those dealing specifically with Tafsir. According to him, interpreters added 'weak' traditions to their works so as to counter the arguments of their rival sects or to explain Quranic verses in accordance with the dictates of Greek philosophy.<sup>153</sup> On the authority of some of the most learned Muslim scholars, including Suyuti and Dhahbi, Hali reached the conclusion that *almost* all the traditions quoted by commentators about Quranic *qissas* had been borrowed from Ahl al-Kitab ('People of the Book', i.e. Christians and Jews) and hence were unworthy of reliance. In saying so, Hali was clearly following the idea floated by Sayyid Ahmad regarding the Quranic stories. It may well be that Hali wrote this essay to support Sayyid Ahmad's endeavours as at the time of its publication, i.e. in 1879, Sayyid Ahmad had started publishing his essays on Quranic *qissas* and had encountered stiff opposition because of his 'naturalist' approach in interpreting these events.

After Sayyid Ahmad's death Hali wrote another essay titled, 'Is there a room for another interpretation of Quran',<sup>154</sup> where he favoured Sayyid Ahmad's view that there was a need for a new '*Ilm al-Kalam* (Science of Scholasticism) in the face of developments in the field of Science and Philosophy though he did not explicitly lend his support to all of Sayyid Ahmad's religious ideas and understanding of the Quran as expressed in his *Tafsir*. His main aim was to justify Sayyid Ahmad's stand of writing a Tafsir with a new approach but not to assess his findings in this regard. In *Hayat-i-Javed* Hali took up this issue in much more detail. There, too, he favoured Sayyid Ahmad's efforts to 'develop' a new '*Ilm al-Kalam*. As for Sayyid Ahmad's interpretations on the basis of his '*Ilm al-Kalam*, Hali compared in detail the similarities and differences between the religious ideas of earlier Muslim scholars and Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>155</sup> In his assessment, Hali did not commit himself wholly to Sayyid Ahmad's religious views though he appeared to be inclined in its favour.

A more scholarly study of Hadith was carried out by another of Sayyid Ahmad's associates, Shibli Nu'mani (1857–1914), who was more of 'a traditionalist marginally affected by modernity.'<sup>156</sup> He was a strict Hanafi and his reverence for the learned founder of Hanafi Fiqh—Abu Hanifa—can be judged from the fact that Shibli's pen-name 'Nu'mani' comes from Abu Hanifa's real name 'Nu'man'. In Shibli's opinion a man could be a Christian but not a *ghayr muqallid*.<sup>157</sup> Even with such views, Shibli was considerably more lax in his views on Hadith than the rest of the Hanafis, especially Deobandis. His ideas on Hadith are mostly to be found in his biography of Abu Hanifa, titled *Sirat-i-Nu'man*—published shortly before Sayyid Ahmad's last statement on Hadith—where he enumerates and defends Abu Hanifa's contributions to Hadith. Nu'mani argued that the reason no Hadith had been reported in the *Sihah Satta* on the authority of Abu Hanifa was not because of any doubts as to his credentials as a Muhaddith but because his specialized field was that of a jurist. As a jurist Abu Hanifa was concerned more with those traditions alone that could have a bearing on legal rulings.<sup>158</sup> Also, Abu Hanifa's strict criteria for accepting traditions accounts for the lesser number of Ahadith being reported on his authority. This strict criterion in turn is Abu Hanifa's main contribution to Hadith studies.

Shibli agreed with Sayyid Ahmad in lauding the efforts of the Muhaddithun in collecting the traditions and in pointing out the lack of content analysis of the traditions that they had collected. According to Shibli, Abu Hanifa addressed this problem in a major way in the form of establishing the principles of *darayat*. His principle of giving precedence to '*aqal-i-qat'i*' (irrefutable reason) and accepting *khabr-i-ahad* as conjectural only, were part of Sayyid Ahmad's *darayat* principles as well. His third principle of '*illat-i-kafaya*' (hidden reason) states that a scholar with years of experience in different aspects of Islamic studies is capable of acquiring a certain ability whereby he can doubt the veracity of traditions.<sup>159</sup> The other most important aspect of Abu Hanifa's Hadith analysis was to set up a hierarchal order to determine the authenticity of traditions and the corresponding levels of their legal effectiveness. Of the three 'levels' of authenticity thus established, Abu Hanifa gave preference to *mutawatir* and *mashhur*. In case of *ahad* he allowed more leverage to the jurist for arriving at a legal judgment or ruling. Since the bulk of the Hadith material is based on reports by a single narrator, the number of truly binding traditions is greatly lessened. To this already reduced and graded Hadith material, Shibli applied Abu Hanifa's distinction between *tashri'i* (legislative) and *ghayr tashri'i* (non-legislative) commands of the

Prophet. In doing so Shibli unwittingly made room for fresh legislation in Islam.<sup>160</sup>

Shibli's religious thought process evolved further and the orthodox Hanafi ideas that he held earlier were toned down. This is seen in his magnum opus *Sirat-ul-Nabi* as he evaluates the relative merits of historical material available for writing Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) biography. Like Muir and Sayyid Ahmad, Shibli gave foremost preference to the Quran which was followed by Hadith instead of *Sirat* or *Maghazi* (accounts of military expeditions of the Prophet) literature. But he did not acquiesce to the authority and authenticity of Hadith literature unreservedly. Shibli found fault with a number of traditions in *Bukhari* and *Muslim* which clearly reflected a change in his intellectual outlook.<sup>161</sup>

Both Hali and Shibli did not go to the extent of agreeing with the details of Sayyid Ahmad's Hadith criticism but they realized the importance of his work in defending the character of the Prophet and teachings of Islam from the slanders of missionaries, Orientalists and other critics with similar ideas. They responded to criticism of Islam and its Prophet in a similar manner but unlike Sayyid Ahmad, they did not attempt to undertake a detailed and systematic study of Hadith to set their own criteria for the authenticity of Hadith through which they could counter the arguments of their opponents.<sup>162</sup> The same holds true for Muslim modernists like Sayyid Amir 'Ali (1849–1928)<sup>163</sup> who, during his student years in England, wrote *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Muhammad* in English which was published from London in 1873. A revised edition of the book with some additions and titled *The Spirit of Islam* was published in 1891. Amir 'Ali's book is a scholarly work which surpasses Sayyid Ahmad's *Khutbat* since it contains comparative civilizational and religious study and arguments drawn in favour of Islam from a number of European works on philosophy, ethics and history. But when it came to a critical analysis of sources of Islam, Amir 'Ali did not resort to drafting rules for ascertaining sayings of the Prophet on the basis of isnad or content analysis. He applied more or less the same standards proposed by Sayyid Ahmad Khan. He adopted a similar 'anti-Waqidi' approach and quoted frequently from Sayyid Ahmad's work.<sup>164</sup> An addition that Amir 'Ali made in narrating the origin of Hadith literature and the fabrications made to it was to emphasize, in a more detailed manner, the role of political interests of those collecting the traditions. In accordance with his Shi'a beliefs, he remarked that all traditions reporting 'Ali's claim to the caliphate were suppressed.<sup>165</sup> On the basis of this he did

not rule out the role played by traditions in promoting sectarian differences between the Muslims.

Being a law-expert, Amir 'Ali was more concerned with the question of Hadith's status as supplementary to that of the Quran. In this respect he gave primacy to the Quran as the most essential source of Muslim law and argued against limiting Ijtihad to only the first few centuries of Islam. But he did accord respect to Hadith and its related branches of 'ulum developed by Muslim scholars over centuries as valuable contributions to historiography. It was because he claimed himself to be a 'Mutazilite' who had eliminated 'such alleged sayings of the Prophet as appeared incompatible and out of harmony with his [Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH)] developed teachings as explained and illustrated by the philosophers and jurists of his race.<sup>166</sup>

The most important person other than Sayyid Ahmad to radically revise traditionally held Muslim views regarding Isnad Paradigm, and even Quran, was Maulwi Chiragh 'Ali (1846-95).<sup>167</sup> His intent was similar to that of Sayyid Ahmad: he was concerned with replying to the Orientalist projection of Islam as a religion inciting violence and to challenge the missionary notion of Islamic law's stagnancy and inadequacy of its provisions to keep up with the changes of time. In his earlier work *Ta'liqat*, written in response to 'Imad-ud-Din's *Tarikh-i-Muhammadi* in 1872, Chiragh 'Ali had not yet developed his radical ideas regarding Hadith. He accepted Isnad as a valuable mean for scrutinizing Ahadith and believed that the process of Hadith compilation started after Prophet's migration to Medina and reached its high point under caliph 'Umar bin 'Abdul 'Aziz.<sup>168</sup> In his later works, however, he went to the extent of questioning the role of Islamic injunctions in formulating civil laws and their relation to the functioning of the state and the management of its political affairs. He expressed these views in *The Proposed Political, Constitutional and Legal Reforms in the Ottoman Empire and Other Mohammedan States*, published in 1883.<sup>169</sup> In this book he aimed at making Muslim political and civil law amenable to change. This he accomplished by presenting the Quran as no more than a book of moral exhortations meant for the spiritual purification of the Arabs. According to Chiragh 'Ali, the Quran was not meant to give detailed guidance about civil law or lay down principles of jurisprudence. This is why verses relating to such issues number only 200 out of 6,000 total verses of the Quran. Even these verses mostly comprise of a single word or an isolated sentence and hence do not allow much leverage for deducting rules or laws for civil and political institutions.<sup>170</sup> What had been regarded by the

Muslim jurists as verses dealing with civil law are, in actual, the Quran's judicious and harmless accommodations with some of the civil and social institutions of Arabs due to their state of decadence. This was to be considered as a valid explanation for Quran's dealings with matters pertaining to polygamy, divorce, concubinage and slavery. According to him: 'These accommodations were set aside in their adult strength, or in other words when they had begun to emerge under its influence from their barbarism into a higher condition of amelioration.'<sup>171</sup>

He elaborated this stance further in *Critical Exposition of the Popular Jihad* published in 1885, adding that these 'laws' had been introduced to allow the transformation of a barbaric community to a higher state of civilization and not as a general rule for all the communities of the world which already had the desired level of civilization.<sup>172</sup> Not only did Chiragh 'Ali introduce the rule of distinguishing between the religious and the secular in Quranic contents—which Sayyid Ahmad and his associates had done in case of Hadith—he questioned the fixity of even those of its contents dealing with religious rituals and obligations. His belief that the Quran did not prescribe a clear way of performing Namaz and simply commanded the believers to remember God anywhere and at anytime without mentioning any definite time for offering the prayers,<sup>173</sup> was later used by an Amritsar-based Ahl al-Qur'an group by the name of Ummat-i-Muslima.

In discussing Hadith as the second source of Muslim 'law', Chiragh 'Ali first traced the history of Hadith in which he agreed with Muir that on some matters of detail. He, in Muir's vein, believed that the conversations of the Prophet's Companion's were mostly about him and that they made an effort to follow his sayings especially when later generations began to reposit supernatural powers to the personage of the Prophet. As the accumulation of Hadith material began, it soon gave rise to a mixed bag of true as well as fabricated traditions. The efforts made by later scholars to sift genuine traditions from fake ones, came too late and were too inadequate. Chiragh 'Ali made use of Muir's terminology to describe the isnad system as a 'pseudo-critical' ordeal.<sup>174</sup> In Chiragh 'Ali's history of Hadith, the focus is more on why no written record of Hadith literature was available for a long period of time. His argument is based on the preposition that if the Hadith was meant to be such an important source, then why did the Prophet omit the important task of compiling a book of his own sayings?<sup>175</sup> He put the same question to the Hanafis who held the view that Abu Hanifa could not make use of many Ahadith as most Hadith compendiums had not been published at that time. In



this case, then, Chiragh 'Ali posed the question to the Hanafis as to why Abu Hanifa resorted to his work of Fiqh in the first place without having access to the all-important source of Hadith at his disposal? This led Chiragh 'Ali to conclude that the 'Prophet's rulings and commands outside the Quran are based on his opinion (*ra'y*) and Ijtihad and have not been made into a law for the general believers.<sup>176</sup> On the basis of this reasoning, Chiragh 'Ali disqualifies the merits of both the Quran and the Hadith as sources for the formulation of any fixed or defined set of laws for political or civil purposes.

In his own religious views, Sayyid Ahmad had never questioned the binding authority of the Quran and limited his objections on Hadith to insisting that it be scrutinized on a rational basis to make it acceptable. It was only with regard to Ijma' (consensus) that he expressed an explicit refusal to adhere to it.<sup>177</sup> In comparison, Chiragh 'Ali's statements and views on the Quran and Hadith were evidently so radical that even Sayyid Ahmad Khan found the contents of the book controversial and provoking. This was the reason for his postponing the publication of the Urdu translation of his book which, he thought, would raise a storm of criticism and ill-feeling against Chiragh 'Ali.<sup>178</sup>

Making room for fresh legislation in Islamic law was only one part of Chiragh 'Ali's radical interpretation for the Quran and Hadith. His other important work dealt with the issue of Jihad—a theme that was being taken up by other Muslim 'apologists' as well. He followed other 'apologists' in declaring all the wars fought by the Prophet as essentially defensive. His own original ideas come into play when he took up the more controversial question of interpreting the verses in the Quran on Jihad. He benefited from Sayyid Ahmad's Tafsir in giving completely new meanings to some of the verses in utter disregard for what the earlier scholars and commentators had written. For instance, with regard to a particular Quranic verse on Jihad,<sup>179</sup> Chiragh 'Ali held the opinion that it did not enjoin the Muslims to fight with infidels till they accept Islam but only up to the point where the Muslims were enabled to acquire religious freedom.<sup>180</sup> Similarly for another verse,<sup>181</sup> he opined that God had made provision for the Muslims to take action against the Meccans for not implementing the terms of the agreement but since the Meccans acceded to the Muslims' demands there was never any need to implement the commands of this *ayat*. That particular *ayat* remained, and shall remain, as 'an unimplemented letter'.<sup>182</sup>

According to Chiragh 'Ali there were only some verses in the Quran which unconditionally called for the Muslims to fight against the *kafirs*



(infidels). In case of these verses Chiragh 'Ali referred to Suyuti's exegetical principles that the general or unconditional (*'am*) verses were to be interpreted in conformity with the specific or conditional (*khas*) verses. This was because the 'general ruling is compendious (*mujmal*) while the specific ruling is perspicuous (*muhkam*) and clearly states the intention of the author.'<sup>183</sup> Once he had proved that the Quran only allowed defensive wars he found himself in a convenient position to reject any Hadith that went against this clear injunction of the Quran on the basis of it being fabricated or wrongly transmitted by the narrator.<sup>184</sup>

Related to this discussion on Jihad were his concerns about the issues of slavery. His discussion of these issues gives an excellent example of the Muslim modernists' attempts to dissociate themselves from the 'embarrassing' details of the past by suggesting alternative versions that fit well with their own mindset as Western educated Muslims influenced by European concepts of Enlightenment. This is clearly seen in his comments on the incident of punishment for the Jews of Banu Quraiza and the Prophet's relation with a concubine-turned wife Maria. In case of Banu Quraiza it has generally been reported that they were punished for their dubious role in the Battle of Trench. Sa'ad bin Mu'adh, to whose appointment as a judge the Jews themselves agreed to, gave the verdict that all able-bodied men should be put to sword, women and children taken prisoners and their property distributed among Muslims. Some reports quote the Prophet praising Mu'adh for judging like an Angel. Chiragh 'Ali refused to accept all these details. Firstly, he believed that the Prophet did not call Mu'adh a *malak* (Angel) but *malik* (King). He blamed the later transmitters to have played upon this slight difference to increase the importance of Mu'adh. No evidence was cited by Chiragh 'Ali to prove his point.<sup>185</sup> He simply stated that the actual number of men killed was very few. Similarly, he disagreed with Muir's charge that the women and children were sold as slaves. But he had no historical reference for this claim other than the presumption that the Quran did not allow slave trade and aspired to bring an end to it by encouraging Muslims to free slaves as an act of virtue and release prisoners of war by accepting a war ransom from them. He concluded on this basis that the women and the children must have all been released.<sup>186</sup> On traditions relating to Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) relations with Maria, Chiragh 'Ali raised a number of objections. He did not find any conclusive evidence suggesting that the ruler of Egypt sent any girls as presents. In case he did, it needed to be checked if one of them was named Maria and whether or not she was a slave girl. It is because *Bukhari* and *Muslim* do not mention Egypt's ruler

sending a slave girl as a present in response to the Prophet's letter to him.<sup>187</sup> Similarly, these two authorities do not report Maria giving birth to the Prophet's son Ibrahim. With little credible information available about Maria, Chiragh 'Ali questioned Muir's interpretation of the events described in *Surah Tehrim* of the Quran as relating to domestic troubles brewing in the Prophet's household because of Maria's addition to his *harem* giving rise to mutual jealousies among the rest of his wives. Chiragh 'Ali did not offer an alternative explanation for this event mentioned in the Quran and limited himself to raising doubts about the 'existence' of Maria and the issue of the Prophet having relations with a slave girl. It is possible that Chiragh 'Ali took up this issue deliberately in response to what Sprenger had written about it in his letter that Quranic verses dealing with the Prophet's family matters shock the religious sentiments of the believers and make it difficult for the devotees to furnish an explanation for it.<sup>188</sup> Sayyid Ahmad too wanted to address this issue but he died before he could finish his essay on the wives of the Prophet and 'resolve' the question of the Prophet's relations with Maria and the events giving rise to the verses in *Surah Tehrim*.

### 3.10. CONCLUSION

While enumerating the services of Sayyid Ahmad Khan for the Muslims of South Asia, Hali cited some of the 'challenges' which the Muslims had to cope with. Missionaries were propagating against Islam, its Prophet and teachings while the spread of Western education was making an impact on the impressionable minds of young Muslims.<sup>189</sup> Sayyid Ahmad Khan's panacea for facing these challenges to the Muslim faith was tied up with renouncing *taqlid* and making way for fresh thinking in religious, social, and political aspects of Islam. It was because the prevalent circumstances had brought about a change in Sayyid Ahmad's *weltanschauung* and forced him to reconsider his views on Muslim sources relating to religion and history of Islam, especially Hadith literature. Accordingly, he proceeded to set a precedent for a 'modernistic' approach towards different aspects of Islam by re-interpreting Muslim history and theology to the exclusion of any such blemish that might not concur with the dictates of a modern world cast in the mould of predominantly European ideals. This could only be achieved by re-interpreting sacred texts, dissociating Islam from some and ascribing new meanings to the rest. It also required, at the same time, setting up of his own standards of *quellenkritik* so as to disallow Islam-bashers from arguing their cases from

historical texts that were, and normally have been, held in high esteem by Muslim scholars. The end result of Sayyid Ahmad's efforts was the emergence of a neo-Mutazilite spirit, initially among Western-educated Muslims, whereby they retained their respect and admiration for their religion and their Prophet, while at the same time challenging or revising those aspects of traditionally held views which conflicted with their own modern sensibilities, inspired largely by Western thought. The emergence of this new religious *corps de elite*—steeped in the Western tradition of rationality and enlightenment yet cognizant of its identity as a Muslim and adherent of God's best and last religion—led to prevent Sayyid Ahmad's concerns about Western education giving way to a 'Sprengerian' state of apostasy from being actualized. Quite contrary to what Sprenger had prophesied about Western educated Muslims renouncing Islam, these Muslims became the real impetus for a revisionist critique of Islam in South Asia. In doing so a wholly new version of Islam gradually emerged, differing in many aspects from the traditionally held views of the majority of Muslims. But in Sayyid Ahmad's opinion this new interpretation giving rise to a new line of thought within Islam it was far better than having sceptical Muslims renouncing their faith altogether.<sup>190</sup> This is precisely what has happened. As these religious ideas trickled down to those who had been imparted education in a more traditional way, a new creed of Muslim scholars—subsumable under the appellation of Ahl al-Qur'an—eventually emerged bearing the distinctly discernible imprint of the writings of Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Maulwi Chiragh 'Ali.

## NOTES

1. Sayyid Ahmad Khan's lecture on Islam delivered in Lahore before the Anjuman-i Himayat-i Islam, on 2 February 1884. Cited with translation in Christian W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (New Delhi, 1978), 314.
2. Alois Sprenger's letter to Maulwi Chiragh 'Ali on 8 May 1884, in Maulwi Chiragh 'Ali, *Azam ul-Kalam fi Irtiqā-ul-Islam*, trans. Maulana 'Abdul Haq (Hyderabad Deccan, 1910), II(1), 75.
3. Ulama opposed to Sayyid Ahmad, and especially Ahl al-Qur'an, are unanimous in declaring Sayyid Ahmad Khan as the pioneering Munkir-i-Hadith. In a special issue on 'deniers of Hadith', *Muhaddith*—an Ahl-i-Hadith journal—quoted the opinion of Sana'ullah Amritsari, Taqi 'Usmani and 'Abul 'Ala Maududi to the effect that Sayyid Ahmad Khan was the first person in India to set the precedent for Ahl al-Qur'an to follow. Cf. Dr Muhammad 'Abdullah 'Abid, 'Barr-i-Saghir men Fitna-i Inkar-i-Hadith ki Tarikh aur Asbab', *Muhaddith* 34, 8–9 (2002): 120–21.
4. For a biography of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, cf. Altaf Husayn Hali, *Hayat-i-Javed* (Lahore, repr. 1966). Sayyid Ahmad's religious ideas have been extensively researched in different studies. Cf. Christian W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad: J.M.S. Baljon, Reforms and*

- Religious Ideas of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (Lahore, 1964); B.A. Dar, *Religious Thought of Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (Lahore, 1957); and K.A. Nizami, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (New Delhi, 1974). For collected works of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, cf. Maulana Muhammad Isma'il Panipati, ed. *Maqalat-i Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (Lahore, 1962–65).
5. Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 33.
  6. Later in his career, Sayyid Ahmad was to denounce all such details of supernatural and miraculous occurrences in Prophet's life. Thirty-six years after the publication of *Qulub*, he wrote a review of his own work and concluded that he had quoted incidents from several unauthentic books and many of the Hadith did not even remotely meet the criteria that he laid down in his later works on Hadith criticism. Dr Anwar Mehmud Khalid, *Urdu Nasr men Sirat-i-Rusul* (Lahore, 1989), 266–67.
  7. Mohamed Abdulla Pasha, *Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan: His Life and Times, a Historical Survey* (Lahore, 1998), 144.
  8. For example, for any such Hadith that hints at undesirability of dining with the Christians, Sayyid Ahmad offers the explanation that the restriction therein may be limited to not sharing *haram* (forbidden) food and drinks, or from using those utensils in which such food had been served, or it may be fake altogether. For his complete essay, cf. *Maqalat-i-Sir Sayyid*, I, 298–383.
  9. During his stay in Ghazipur, Sayyid Ahmad had come into contact with 'Inayat Rusul Charyakoti who had studied the original texts of Old and New Testaments. Sayyid Ahmad even hired a Jew to help him read the original text. Cf. Muhammad 'Ali Fariq, 'Harf-i-Awwal' in Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Tabayyin-ul-Kalam*, 3 vols. (Lahore, repr. 2007), 6.
  10. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Tabayyin*, I, 13.
  11. *Ibid.*, 64.
  12. Perhaps the earliest writings against Sayyid Ahmad Khan's religious thought were prompted by his tract *Abkam-i-Ta'am*. Maulwi Imdad-ul-'Ali and Maulwi Muhammad 'Ali wrote against Sayyid Ahmad's views regarding social interaction with the Christians. Hali, *Hayat-i-Javed*, 534; Surrayya Husayn, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan aur unka 'ehad* (Aligarh, 1993), 186–87. To judge the extent of Muslim's aversion to the idea of interaction with 'infidel' British, one has to look at the behavior of Maulwi Mamluk 'Ali who had taught both Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Qasim Nanautwi. It is reported that once the British Resident was on visit of Delhi College and shook hands with Mamluk 'Ali by way of courtesy. Mamluk 'Ali 'kept what he considered his defiled hand separate from the rest of his person as though the hand had been an unclean object. On the departure of the British guest, Maulwi Sahib washed his hands thoroughly several times.' Quoted in Margrit Pernau, ed. *The Delhi College: Traditional Elites, the Colonial State, and Education before 1857* (New Delhi, 2006), 23.
  13. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Tabayyin*, II, 66.
  14. *Ibid.*, 137.
  15. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad*, 147–9.
  16. For more details on Delhi College, cf. Margrit Pernau, ed. *The Delhi College*.
  17. Alan M. Guenther, 'The Hadith in Christian-Muslim Discourse in British India, 1857–1888' (MA thesis, McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, 1997), 45.
  18. *Ibid.*, 46.
  19. Muir, soon after his arrival in India, had become a disciple of Evangelical administrator James Thomason. His involvement in Evangelical Mission's activities increased to such an extent that he even co-founded a North India Christian Tract and Book Society for mass dissemination of Christian Scriptures and other missionary literature. *Ibid.*, 7.

20. Avril A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Surrey, 1993), 138.
21. Sir William Muir, *The Muhammadan Controversy and Other Indian Articles* (repr. Allahabad, 1979), 20.
22. For a critique of Western biographers of Muhammad in late nineteenth and early twentieth century, cf. Jabal Muhammad Buaben, *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West: A Study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt* (Leicester, 1996).
23. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, 203. But Muir was impressed with Gustav Weil, a Jew who had worked in Cairo with Arab Philologists and was the first European scholar to have used hitherto rare Arab manuscripts to attempt at a Ranke-type historical reconstruction of the Caliphate era. Ibid., 147.
24. Avril A. Powell, 'Religious Traditions in Two Families of Scholars in North India', in Jamal Malik, ed. *Perspectives of Mutual Encounters in South Asian History 1760–1860* (Leiden, 2000), 202.
25. Ibid., 207.
26. Muir, *Muhammadan Controversy*, 88.
27. Ibid., 87. However, Muir never managed to complete an Urdu translation of his work and it was left to a Christian convert from Islam, Maulana 'Imad-ud-Din Panipati, to complete this task twenty years later in 1871. For details about 'Imad-ud-Din and his works, cf. Powell, 'Religious Traditions in Two Families', 210–222.
28. William Muir, *Life of Mahomet from Original Sources* (London, 1858–61). Muir had started writing parts of it in the 1850s which were then periodically published in *Calcutta Review*.
29. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad*, 116.
30. Muir, *Muhammadan Controversy*, 67.
31. For a comprehensive account of Agra debate and the religious controversies and Christian–Muslim polemics raging in the North-West Province in the preceding decades, cf. Avril A. Powell *Muslims and Missionaries*, especially Chapter VI.
32. Powell, 'Religious Traditions in Two Families', 201.
33. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, 248.
34. Ibid., 261.
35. The first of Sprenger's two biographies of Muhammad was published in 1851. That was around the time when Muir had started to make plans for his own research on the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Although, by the time Sprenger's second book came out in installments in 1860s, Muir had already published his work, he continued to benefit from Sprenger's expertise in the field of Islamic studies. This is especially more pronounced in Muir's praise for Sprenger on several occasions for the re-prints of *authentic* history books that he had made possible. Also, Muir appears to have benefited from Sprenger's scholarly work on Hadith methodology and history which was periodically published in the *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*. In this regard, Sprenger's article in 1856 in which he discussed the origin of written record of Hadith literature was most important. Cf. *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, V (1856).
36. For Sprenger's interaction with the scholars at Delhi College and elsewhere in North India, cf. Muhammad Ikram Chughtai, ed. 'Ek Nadir Majmu'a-i-Makatib', *Urdu* (Karachi) (1985–86). For other details about his life and works, Muhammad Ikram Chughtai, 'Dr Aloys Sprenger and the Delhi College', in Margrit Pernau, ed. *The Delhi College*, 105–24; Norbert Manel, *Aloys Sprenger: Der Orientalist und Islamhistoriker aus Nasereith in Tirol. Zum 100. Todestag am 19. Dezember 1993* (Nassereith, 1993).
37. Powell, 'Religious traditions in two families', 202.

38. It was during this stay in Lucknow that enabled him to trace the manuscript of Tabari's biography of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Muir praised Sprenger for his effort in these words: 'Here again the literary world is indebted to Dr Sprenger, who, having been deputed by the enlightened policy of the Indian Government to examine the Native libraries of Lucknow, succeeded in tracing from amongst heaps of neglected manuscripts, a portion of the long lost volume.' Muir, *Life of Mohammad*, lxxxiv.
39. *Urdu Da'irah Ma'arif-i-Islamiyya*, (Lahore, 1964-), XI, 657.
40. Muir's list of friends, among many others, included Sadr-ud-Din Azurda, Maulwi Zaka' Ullah (the prolific writer and historian), and even Sayyid Ahmad Khan. For details about Sadr-ud-Din Azurda and Zaka' Ullah, cf. Margrit Pernau, ed. *The Delhi College*, chapters 4 and 9 respectively.
41. Aloys Sprenger, *Life of Muhammad* (Allahabad, 1851). The first modern, scholarly biography of Muhammad (ﷺ) in the West, however, was published by Gustav Weil in 1843. Cf. Harold Motzki, ed. 'Introduction' in *The Biography of Muhammad: the Issue of Sources* (Leiden, 2000), XI.
42. Aloys Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Muhammad, nach Bisher Grösstentheils Unbenutzten Quellen* (Berlin, 1865).
43. Muir, *Muhammadan Controversy*, 103.
44. *Ibid.*, 104.
45. But since these *Original Documents* can only be known by the means of Tradition so they do not, according to Muir, properly form a separate class. *Ibid.*, 104.
46. Sprenger, *Das Leben*, III, civ; quoted in Muir, *Muhammadan Controversy*, 127.
47. In his other writings on Hadith and its history, Sprenger seems to be among the earliest of Orientalists to hold the view that Hadith came into wider circulation or recorded in written form not earlier than the end of first century of Islam. For details, cf. Sprenger's article 'On the Origin and Progress of Writing Down Historical Facts Among the Musalmans', *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XXV (1856).
48. Muir, *Muhammadan Controversy*, 119; italics added.
49. *Ibid.*, 122.
50. Still, Muir fell short of elevating Biographies to a higher status in his critical review of sources on the Prophet's life.
51. *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* (1905): 876; cited in Jabal Muhammad Buaben, *Image of the Prophet Muhammad*, 41.
52. This first chapter of Muir's book is almost a reprint of an earlier article in *Calcutta Review* published in 1853. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad*, 116.
53. Muir, *Life of Mohammed* (repr. New York, 1975), xxvii.
54. *Ibid.*, xxvi.
55. *Ibid.*, xxvii; italics by Muir.
56. *Ibid.*, xxviii.
57. As early as 1845, Muir had called for a 'sifting analysis of the traditions, according to the probable dates of their being recorded; an account of the individuals who registered them, of the means they possessed for arriving at a true knowledge of the facts; and the numbers through whom they successively descended.' Muir, *Muhammadan Controversy*, 18.
58. *Ibid.*, xxix.
59. *Ibid.*, xxix.
60. *Ibid.*, xxxii.
61. *Ibid.*, xxxiii.
62. Muir, *Life of Mohammed*, xxxix.
63. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad*, 121.



64. Muir calls it as a rule of 'respectable names'. Muir, *Life of Mohammed*, lxxv.
65. Ibid., xliii.
66. Ibid., xlvii.
67. Ibid., xlix.
68. Ibid., liv.
69. Ibid., l.
70. Ibid., liv.
71. Ibid., lvii.
72. Ibid., lviii.
73. Powell, 'Religious Traditions in Two Families of Scholars', 207. Muir had written a lengthy article in *Muhammadan Controversy* to counter the claims made in such Maulud literatures. Cf. Muir, *Muhammadan Controversy*, 76–88.
74. Muir's elder brother John Muir (1810–82) had a similar belief regarding the historicity of miraculous stories in ancient Hindu texts. The Muir brothers reflect the influence of Evidential Theology of William Palley (1743–1805) which stated that God affirmed true religions by verifiable miracles. Cf. Guenther, 'Hadith in Christian-Muslim Discourse', 73.
75. Muir, *Life of Mohammed*, lviii.
76. Ibid., lxii.
77. Ibid., lxiii.
78. Ibid., lxix–xx.
79. Ibid., lxxi; italics by Muir.
80. On this point he had clear disagreements with Sprenger who seemed to have a more favourable opinion about Traditionists.
81. See the following pages for the detailed narration of this event.
82. Muir, *Life of Mohammed*, lxxx.
83. Ibid., lxxxiii.
84. Ibid., lxxxv.
85. The details of this incident, as reported in some Hadith collections and historical treatises, are that the Prophet once recited verses from Surah *An-Najam* (The Star) of Quran in front of a selective audience of infidel Meccan chieftains. The nineteenth verse of this chapter talks of the pagan goddesses of the Meccans. It says: 'Have you thought upon Al-Lat, Al-Uzza; and Manat, the third, the other?' When the Prophet reached the end of this verse, some controversial Ahadith allege that the Satan cast into his mind praise for these deities and made him utter that: 'Indeed, they are as high-flying cranes! And, indeed their intercession (with God) is hoped for.' After Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) had finished reciting the verses, he prostrated and so did the Meccans present as they felt that the status of their deities has been duly acknowledged. This brought a temporary halt to persecutions inflicted upon the Muslims by the Meccans, and some of the migrants to Abyssinia—after coming to know about the truce between the Muslims and the Meccans—decided to return to Mecca. Later, Gabriel visited the Prophet to inform him about the revocation of the Satanic interpolation to the Quranic text. The aforementioned 'verses' in praise of the deities were replaced with another verse and the rationale for what had taken place was revealed in Surah *Al-Hajj* (The Pilgrimage). It said: 'Never sent We a messenger or a prophet before thee but when he recited (the message) Satan proposed (opposition) in respect of that which he recited thereof. But Allah abolisheth that which Satan proposeth. Then Allah establisheth His revelations. Allah is Knower, Wise.' This incident of 'Satanic verses' has been reported by such important authorities as 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud. If accepted in its entirety, this incident can pose doubts about

the ability of the Prophet to serve as an exemplary model worthy of imitation and contradicts the theoretical principle of Prophetic infallibility (or *'isma*) in the transmission of Divine revelation. Therefore, from the perspective of some Muslim scholars—such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan is shown later in this chapter—the incident should either be categorically denied on the basis of its weak Isnad or the narrative re-figured in such a way that the Prophet is absolved of the charge of falling prey to the temptations of Satan to indulge in the adulteration of the Quranic text.

86. Muir, *Life of Mohammed*, II, 153.
87. Ibid., IV, 160.
88. Ibid., III, 228.
89. Ibid., III, 229.
90. Ibid., IV, 161.
91. Ibid., IV, 162.
92. But even this explanation looks inadequate in the face of Muir's prominent stature in the administrative hierarchy of the province and close acquaintances with leading men of letters in and around Delhi, including Sayyid Ahmad Khan. None of the leading scholars and historians documenting the lives and works of Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Orientalists like Muir and Sprenger, have looked into this matter seriously.
93. One can note an ambiguity in Sayyid Ahmad Khan's attitude towards William Muir. On one hand Sayyid Ahmad was proceeding to London ostensibly to pen a befitting reprieve to Muir's provocative work and yet before his departure he was eager to call upon Muir to say good-bye to him. After Muir's retirement from official service and as the Lieutenant Governor of United Provinces, Sayyid Ahmad headed a 'Muir Memorial Committee' founded in 1876 which proposed to set up a memorial statue for Muir at Allahabad. The committee requested donations from the wealthy and influential of the province. Stark, *Empire of Books*, 149.
94. Hali, *Hayat-i-Javed*, 427.
95. Shaykh Muhammad Isma'il Panipati, ed. *Musafiran-i-London*, (Lahore, 1961), 248–49.
96. Hali, *Hayat-i-Javed*, 429.
97. The complete title of the book, as published in 1870, is: 'A Series of Essays on the Life of Muhammad and Subjects Subsidiary Thereto'. A further subtitle states that 'the original English text of these essays has been revised and corrected by a friend.' Urdu title of the book is *Al-Khutbat al-Ahmediyya fil 'Arab wal-Sirat al-Muhammadiyya*. In this chapter, I have used both the English and the Urdu version, later published as part of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's collected works.
98. Panipati, ed. *Musafiran i London*, 244. Unfortunately the book could not sell very well. Sayyid Ahmad had expected to find a sizable readership for his book in Germany and France but a war broke out between these two countries in 1870–1 which affected the sales. Ibid., 265.
99. Ibid., 242–43.
100. Ibid., 254–55.
101. Of all his works, Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *Essays on the Life of Muhammad* written in response to William Muir's biography of Prophet Muhammad, continues to be most popular for both his admirers and detractors. His admirers cite this book to argue for Sayyid Ahmad's sincerity with the cause of Islam and devotion to the life and character of the Prophet. His critics too find it difficult to belittle the work done and effort put in by Sayyid Ahmad to counter Orientalist polemics to malign the character of the Prophet. For an assessment of Sayyid Ahmad's work by different scholars, cf. Khalid, *Urdu Nasr*, 425–33.

102. Panipari, ed. *Musafiran-i-London*, 235–36. In the published version, however, this essay was placed as 6th chapter of the book.
103. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Maqalat*, XI, 369.
104. *Ibid.*, 370.
105. *Ibid.*, 715.
106. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Tabayyin-ul-Kalam*, I, 39.
107. *Ibid.*, 14.
108. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Maqalat*, XI, 383.
109. *Ibid.*, 385.
110. *Ibid.*, 385–86. Sayyid Ahmad has based such an opinion on the basis of the Prophet's saying in which he reportedly said that for all those affairs not relating to religious beliefs, he is a mortal human being like others. He also refers to Shah Wali Ullah's concept of Prophetology to give credence to his own statement. *Ibid.*, 383.
111. In *Tabayyin*, however, Sayyid Ahmad had emphatically emphasized the infallibility of all the Prophets. This theme he had taken up while discussing the story of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis. His interpretation of the events argues that Adam the Prophet was different from Adam the first human being or possibly many others preceding him. It is because, in his opinion Adam—being a Prophet and hence not liable to err—could not have disobeyed God by eating fruit from the forbidden tree. See Sayyid Ahmad, *Tabayyin*, II, 88, 161.
112. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Maqalat*, XI, 409–11.
113. *Ibid.*, 363–64.
114. *Ibid.*, 399–401.
115. *Ibid.*, 401–02.
116. Sayyid Ahmad criticizes the Christian scholars and Orientalists for their lack of knowledge regarding *danayat*. Hughes, best remembered for his *Dictionary of Islam*, took notes about the criteria for acceptance and rejection of Traditions, directly from Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *Khutbat* and then went abroad to broaden his knowledge on 'Ilm al-Hadith further. Cf. Alan M Guenther, 'The Hadith in Christian-Muslim Discourse', 123. In Sayyid Ahmad's opinion Sprenger alone had some basic knowledge about 'Ilm al-Hadith but then his example was more like of a man 'lying in the darkness and in quest for the reality of Light (*Nur*) gets deceived by unfounded doubts because of his bias and lack of knowledge and loses his way.' Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Maqalat*, XI, 405.
117. *Ibid.*, 403–04.
118. He was to do the same for writing an exegesis of Quran saying that the earlier *Mufasssirin* (commentators) did not in any way inhibit him from developing new rules of *Kalam* nor was he bound by the opinions expressed by his predecessors in this field.
119. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Maqalat*, XI, 401. In addition to that, Sayyid Ahmad concurs with two of Muir's rules for content analysis, i.e. the transmitters should not have a biased opinion or a vested interest and must possess first-hand knowledge of the incident. *Ibid.*, 420.
120. *Ibid.*, 445–46. Sayyid Ahmad is not the only Muslim scholar to raise objection to this incident. The above-mentioned excerpt from *Muwahhib al-Ludniya* contained quotes from Qazi Ghayyas and Razi critical of this tradition.
121. *Ibid.*, 447–49. Almost one-hundred years later, Abul 'Ala Maududi adopted a somewhat similar explanation in his *Tafhim-ul-Qur'an*. He wrote: 'The Holy Prophet recited Surah An-Najm and performed prostration at the end of it. At this, all the hearers, both the Muslims and the *mushriks*, fell down in prostration. This was what

really happened and there is nothing strange about it. Let us depict the occasion: The Holy Prophet was reciting a forceful piece of the eloquent Qur'an in a very impressive manner. Naturally the occasion produced an emotional effect and all the listeners instinctively fell down in prostration along with him. It was because of such ecstasies produced by the Holy Prophet's recital of the Qur'an as this that the disbelievers dubbed him a 'sorcerer'. As regards the story that the Holy Prophet praised the deities of the disbelievers, it appears that the Quraish concocted the story to hide their 'defeat'. Probably someone or other of them explained away their defeat, saying, 'We ourselves heard Muhammad praising our deities. Therefore we also fell down in prostration along with him'. As regards the migrants to Habash, they returned to Makkah when they heard the concocted story that there had been a compromise between the Holy Prophet and the Quraish. It appears that some of those people who had seen the Muslims and the mushriks falling down together in prostration, presumed that peace had been made between them, so the story travelled to the migrants in Habash who had no means to verify it and thus thirty-three of them returned to Makkah.' Sayyid Abul 'Ala Maududi, *Towards Understanding the Quran*, trans. Zafar Ishaq Ansari and A.R. Kidwai (Leicester, 1988-), III, 101.

122. Abrogation or *Naskh* can be defined as 'a revelatory process by which certain divine decisions, enacted at a given date, had been overtaken and superseded by other divine decisions enacted at a later date.' For details, cf. John Burton, *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (Edinburgh, 1990), 18. Generally, three modes of *naskh* are recognized by the scholars of the Quran. The first and most common mode of *naskh* is known as *naskh al-hukm duna al-tilawa* in which an earlier ruling of the Quran is replaced by a later one. This mode is best exemplified in the case of bequest verses. According to David S. Powers, the reference in Q 4:12 for designating an heir had to be declared as abrogated for political considerations because it would have proved to be an embarrassment for Abu Bakr who had not received a document of appointment from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The same holds true for all his successors who played a role in the collection of the Quran and manipulated the interpretation of Q 4:12 to remove the reference to the possibility of designating an heir. David S. Powers, *Studies in Quran and Hadith: The Formation of the Islamic Law of Inheritance* (Berkeley, 1986), 212-13. As for those aspects of law for which no provision was to be found in Quran, another mode of *naskh* (*naskh al-tilawa duna al-hukm*) is recognized according to which the wordings of the verse had been removed from the text altogether while the ruling remained valid. The third mode of *naskh*, however, raises most embarrassing questions about the Quran as a Divine text. *naskh al-hukm wal tilawa* stipulates that both the verse and the ruling had been suppressed. As a proof of that there are to be found incidents in authentic Hadith collections which report of Prophet and Companions forgetting parts of revelation. One Hadith reported by 'A'isha, says: 'We were too occupied with the preparations in the Prophet's sick-room to give any thought to the safe-keeping of the sheets on which the revelations had been written out, and while we were tending our patient, a household animal got in from the yard and gobbled up some of the sheets which were kept below the bedding.' Burton, *Sources*, 53.
123. There was a time when 500 verses of Quran were considered cancelled. Shah Wali Ullah reduced this figure to 5. Sayyid Ahmad completely negated *naskh*. Muhammad 'Abduh, too, in his *Tafsir* denied *naskh*. Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan did not consider as cancelled the 5 *ayats* questioned by Shah Wali Ullah. He, however, doubted the status of some other verses of Quran. Shaykh Muhammad Ikram, *Manj-i-Kausar* (Lahore, 1979), 160-61. Sayyid Ahmad Khan has drawn inspiration from Abu

- Muslim al-Isfahani (d. 1066) in holding the view that the abrogation referred to in the Quran was meant to imply the suppression of divine edicts for Jews and Christians and their replacement by the ones revealed for the Muslim community.
124. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Tabayyin*, I, 265.
  125. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *A Series of Essays on the Life of Muhammad* (Lahore, repr. 1968), 259.
  126. *Ibid.*, 260–61.
  127. *Maqalat*, XI, 500.
  128. *Maqalat*, XI, 407.
  129. Sayyid Ahmad had asked Mehdi 'Ali Khan to send him a complete list of all of 'Muhammad's miracles' and also indicate which of these have been generally accepted by Muslims as reliable and for what reasons. *Musafiran-i-London*, 246.
  130. Q 94:1.
  131. Q 17:1, 17:60 and 53:1–18.
  132. *Essays*, 370.
  133. Hali, *Hayat-i-Javed*, 469.
  134. Sayyid, Ahmad immediately after his return from England, started a journal titled *Tebzib-ul-Ikhlāq* in Urdu along with its English version *Mohammadan Social Reformer*. It remained in publication, with some gaps, till Sayyid Ahmad's death. He wrote 208 articles for the journal covering a wide range of his controversial religious ideas. Dr M.A. Siddiqi, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan aur Jiddat Pasandi* (Delhi, 2003), 96.
  135. *Maqalat*, I, 60–63.
  136. *Ibid.*, 78.
  137. *Ibid.*, 75–76.
  138. This tract was published in 1873 and questions Sayyid Ahmad's 30 religious doctrines relating to Unity of God, Prophethood, Angels, Satan, Resurrection, Shari'at, Usul al-Fiqh and other relevant themes. 'Ali Bakhsh Khan was prompted to write this tract in response to Sayyid Ahmad's article 'Adam ki Surguzisht' (The tale of Adam) in which he had given a purely allegorical and rationalistic interpretation of the Paradise story. Cf. Troll, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 1817–98; and his theological critics: the accusations of Ali Bakhsh Khan and Sir Sayyid's Rejoinder', in Muhammad Ikram Chughtai, ed. *Herald of Nineteenth Century Muslim Thought: Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (Lahore, 2005).
  139. *Maqalat*, XIII, 35. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad toes a similar line when he ascribes a conjectural status to a major portion of Hadith literature that does not deal with practices. Even for the ones relevant to Muslim practices and rituals, Ghulam Ahmad accepts them not for their historicity *per se* but because the doctrines specified in them have been in continuous practice among the Muslims for centuries with little disagreements over details. By saying that bulk of the Hadith literature is conjectural—and hence open to wide interpretation—it becomes possible to set aside those Ahadith which seem to disqualify the claims of a Prophet-Messianic figure made by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Such Ahadith—which, for example, talk about his non-Arab background and he not being a scion of the Prophet's progeny—are refuted, reinterpreted and recontextualized in order to conform them to the theological underpinnings of the Ahmadiyya movement. This is best seen in Malik 'Abdul Rahman Khadim's, *Mashabi Insa'iklopidiyya ya'ni Mukammal Tablighi Pakit Buk*. For details about Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's views on Hadith, cf. *Al-Haqq Mubahisa-i-Ludhriyana* (Qadian, 1903).
  140. Muhammad Husayn Batalawi, 'Hadith-i-Nabawi aur Nechari wa 'Isa'i', *Isba'at-us-Sunna* 5, 2–5 (1883), repr. *Rahiq* 1, 4–6 and 2, 4 (1957):14–15.

141. *Ibid.*, 154.
142. *Ibid.*, 157.
143. *Ibid.*, 158.
144. Muhammad Qasim Nanautwi, 'Assessment of Religious Tenets', trans. Peter Hardy in Aziz Ahmad and G.E. Von Grunebaum, eds. *Muslim Self-Statement in India and Pakistan 1857-1968* (Lahore, 2004), 61.
145. Dr M. Ali Siddiqi, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, 100.
146. *Ibid.*, 100.
147. *Maqalat*, VI, 124. Here Sayyid Ahmad himself is agreeing to Muir's proposition that Umayyad-Abbasid rivalry and competition for power gave rise to a number of false traditions. Cf. Muir, *Life of Mohammed*, xxxviii.
148. *Ibid.*, 23-25. In 1873, while responding to 'Ali Bakhsh Khan, Sayyid Ahmad had made a similar statement. He pointed out that Hanafis believe in *Bukhari* to be the most authentic book after Quran but fall short of following all those traditions which contradict their own Fiqh. *Maqalat*, XIII, 38.
149. Muir, *Life of Mohammed*, IV and lviii.
150. These principles were actually written in 1892 as part of correspondence between Sayyid Ahmad and Mehdi 'Ali Khan who was Sayyid Ahmad's friend and a critic of many of his religious ideas, especially on Quranic exegesis. They are considered to be Sayyid Ahmad Khan's most genuine contribution to the discourse on Islamic reform and modern exegetical studies of Quran. For an English translation of Sayyid Ahmad's principles of exegesis and Mehdi 'Ali Khan's objections against it, cf. Ahmad and Von Grunebaum, eds. *Muslim Self-Statement*, 25-48.
151. *Maqalat*, IV, 253.
152. Nazir Ahmad (1830-1912), another of Sayyid Ahmad's associate and important member of 'Aligarh Movement', believed that Hadith, insofar as it was interpretative of Quranic injunctions, was to be followed. Other than that Hadith had relevance only as a historical record. Cf. Ifrikhar Ahmad Siddiqi, *Maulwi Nazir Ahmad Dehlawi: Ahwal wa Asar* (Lahore, 1971), 285-86.
153. *Ibid.*, 29-30.
154. *Ibid.*, 70-97.
155. Hali, *Hayat-i-Javed*, 517-25.
156. Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan: 1857-1964* (London, 1970), 79.
157. Shaykh Muhammad Ikram, *Yadgar-i-Shibli* (Lahore, 1994), 72.
158. Shibli Nu'mani, *Sinat-i-Nu'man* (Lahore, n.d.), 96.
159. Mrs Mehr Afroz Murad, *Intellectual Modernism of Shibli Numani: An Exposition of his Religious and Political Ideas* (Lahore, 1976), 65. The same position was taken up by Maulana Maududi in 1950s for which he satirized by his opponents as having a knack for estimating the temperament of the Prophet (*mizaj shanas-i-rusul*). For details, cf. Chapter 5 and 6.
160. *Ibid.*, 67 and 76. Shibli's views about Abu Hanifa's expertise as a Muhaddith were refuted by 'Abdul 'Aziz Rahimabadi. Cf. 'Abdul Rashid 'Iraqi, *Chalis 'Ulama'-yi Abi-i-Hadith* (Lahore, 2003), 93. For details about Abu Hanifa's 'expertise' of Hadith, cf. Muhammad 'Ali Siddiqi, *Imam-i-Azam aur 'Ilm al-Hadith* (Lahore, 2005).
161. Ikram, *Yadgar-i-Shibli*, 432. Shibli could finish only first two of the six volumes of his proposed book of Muhammad's life. His learned successor Sayyid Sulayman Nadawi completed the work left unfinished by his mentor. Sulayman Nadawi's ideas about Hadith were more traditional than Shibli and so he tries to 'conceal' Shibli's occasional criticism of *Bukhari* and *Muslim*. Cf. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 165 n.



18. Muhammad 'Ali Me'oi—an Ahl-i-Hadith scholar—also objected to Shibli Nu'mani's ideas expressed in the first volume of the *Sirat* regarding the credibility of Hadith as a historical source. Cf. 'Iraqi, *Chalis Ulama*, 138.
162. *Tariq-i-Mawmum* is the title of the tract that Hali wrote in reply to *Tehqiq-ul-Iman* written by 'Imad ud-Din—a Muslim convert to Christianity. Hali's tract was published in 1867 followed by his review article in 1872 in response to 'Imad-ud-Din's *Tarikh-i-Muhammadi*. Other than Hali, there were others as well who wrote in response to 'Imad-ud-Din. They include Chiragh 'Ali, Firoz-ud-Din Daskavi, Muhammad 'Ali Kanpuri, Ikram Ullah Akbarabadi and Sayyid Muhammad Bharatpuri. Cf. Khalid, *Urdu Navr*, 370–75 and 377.
163. For biographical details cf. K.K. Aziz, *Ameer Ali: His Life and Work* (Lahore, 1968); for his religious ideas, Marrin Forward, *The Failure of Islamic Modernism?: Syed Ameer Ali's Interpretation of Islam* (New York, 1999).
164. Guenther, 'Hadith in Christian-Muslim Discourse', 125.
165. *Ibid.*, 123.
166. Sayyid Amir Ali, *The Personal Law of Mahomedans*, (London, 1880), 9–10, cited in Guenther, 'Hadith in Christian-Muslim Discourse', 125.
167. For details about Chiragh 'Ali, see A.N.M. Wahidur-Rahman, 'The Religious Thought of Moulvi Chiragh 'Ali' (MA thesis, McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, 1982); Dr Munawwar Hasan, *Maulwi Chiragh 'Ali ki 'Imi Khidmat* (Patna, 1997).
168. *Ibid.*, 212–13.
169. His purpose was to respond to European writers like Muir, Osborn, Hughes and Sell. For this Chapter I have quoted from the Urdu translation of this book, *A'zam al-kalam fi Irtiqā' al-Islam*, trans. Maulana 'Abdul Haq (Hyderabad Deccan, 1910).
170. Chiragh 'Ali, *Irtiqā' al-Islam*, 17–18.
171. Ahmad and Von Grunebaum, eds. *Muslim Self-Statement*, 49.
172. I have made use of the Urdu translation of this book, *Tehqiq-ul-Jihad*, trans. Maulwi Ghulam-ul-Hasnain Panipati and Maulwi 'Abdul Ghufur Rampuri (Lahore, repr. 2003), 'Muqaddama', 106.
173. *Ibid.*, 109–110.
174. Chiragh 'Ali, *Irtiqā' al-Islam*, 19–20. Chiragh 'Ali's ideas on Hadith guided Goldziher in several ways. The latter did acknowledge that influence. Cf. Aziz Ahmad, *Muslim Modernism*, 60, fn. 12.
175. In his letter to Chiragh 'Ali, Sprenger dismisses the claim that Prophet never ordered the traditions to be written down. Sprenger holds the Hadith literature in high esteem as a relic of the first two centuries of Islam but emphasizes the importance of Sunnat in comparison to Hadith. *Irtiqā' al-Islam*, II(1), 76–9.
176. *Ibid.*, 10–11, n. 1. This clearly is in line with the stance held by the later day Ahl al-Qur'an as would be shown in the other chapters. Chiragh 'Ali himself appears to be aware of the severity of his words. This is why he makes this statement in a footnote and does not follow it with any detailed discussion. Muhammad Iqbal too has raised similar concerns regarding the origins of Hadith literature and Abu Hanifa's limited use of them. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, (Lahore, repr. 1965), 171–73.
177. One example is to be found in his later essay on slavery. He considered the 'consensus' on the permissibility of slavery as grossly in violation of Quranic injunctions. There was no restriction on replacing the prevalent Ijma' with another. *Maqalat*, IV, 535–36.
178. Shaykh Muhammad Isma'il Panipati, ed. *Maktubat-i-Sir Sayyid* (Lahore, 1959), 368. The Urdu translation was finally published in 1910.

179. Q 2:193: 'And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no hostility except against wrong-doers.'
180. Chiragh 'Ali, *Tehqiq-ul-Jihad*, 54. This explanation is similar to the one given by Sayyid Ahmad Khan. *Maqalat*, XIII, 277.
181. Q 9:5: 'Then, when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever ye find them, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush. But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then leave their way free. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.'
182. Chiragh 'Ali, *Tehqiq-ul-Jihad*, 64–65.
183. Wahidur-Rehman, 'Chiragh 'Ali', 132.
184. Chiragh 'Ali, *Tehqiq-ul-Jihad*, 156.
185. *Ibid.*, 47.
186. Chiragh 'Ali, *Tehqiq-ul-Jihad*, 230–31. Sayyid Ahmad Khan simply holds the line that since the decision was taken by Sa'ad b. Mu'adh and the captives had agreed to accept his decision, hence this decision has no bearing whatsoever with God's commandments or that of his Prophet. *Maqalat*, IV, 509–10.
187. Chiragh 'Ali, *Tehqiq-ul-Jihad*, 237.
188. Chiragh 'Ali, *Irtiq' al-Islam*, II (1), 75.
189. Hali, *Hayat-i-Saved*, 424–25.
190. *Kulliyat-i Nusr Hali*, 383–84. Even the most famous of all the apostates—Maulwi 'Imad-ud-Din—felt that he might not have given up his ancestral religion had he read Sayyid Ahmad Khan's works at a time when he was trying to align himself within Islam. Cf. Avril A. Powell, "'Pillar of a New Faith': Christianity in Late-Nineteenth Century Punjab from the Perspective of a Convert 'from Islam' in Robert Eric Frykenberg, ed. *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross Cultural Communication since 1500* (London, 2003), 250.

# 4

## Towards a New Prophetology: Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's Ahl al-Qur'an Movement, 1900–32

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the origins of Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's Ahl al-Qur'an movement in Punjab will be discussed. It will study the identity formations in Punjab in the context of British colonialism and the apparatuses of administration and patronage, among other tools of modernity, appended to it. The pervasive influence of the print media and discursive 'pigeon-holing' of subject population by administrators, orientalist and missionaries alike has also been taken into cognizance while discussing these processes. Special emphasis, however, is laid on the question of Muslim identity formation which has been brought forth in a comparative manner with similar processes at operation among the Hindu and Sikh communities. With emphasis paid on the particular case of Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal's 'apostasy', the imperative felt in the Muslim community for cohesive action for the protection of religious ideals and projection of Islam suited to the dictates of modern times and amiable to the concerns of 'college graduates', has been highlighted. The emergence of Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's Ahl al-Qur'an movement as an endeavour in this regard is, hence, explained in the chapter by foregrounding this historico-political context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Punjab where inter-religious polemics (mostly among the Muslims, Christians, and Arya Samajis) were being negotiated and disputed binaries of authentic versus inauthentic sacred texts, and the vulgarity versus morality of their contents were brought into disputative contestations. This assists in explaining why Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi proclaimed the Quran as the only Divine source of guidance for Muslim

beliefs and practices while similar tendencies were being followed by Arya Samajis and Sikhs with regard to their Vedas and Adi Granth respectively.

#### 4.2. BRITISH COLONIALISM IN PUNJAB

With the annexation of Punjab in 1849 the British proceeded, in accordance with the votaries of selective benevolence espoused by the 'Lawrence School' of colonial administrators of Punjab, to lay down a purportedly paternalistic colonial regime supplemented with an impersonal law system. It was accompanied with the assumption of the responsibility for administering both the civil and criminal justice and a policy of bestowing political favours and economic opportunities on the basis of relative strength of a particular group or community. In order for this elaborate colonial enterprise to function, it was imperative for the British to acquaint themselves with their subjects. The newly introduced practice of 'stock-taking' of the subjects by means of census served as an index of the populace defined within the constraining ambit of essentialized categories with ensuing ambiguities sliced off and calcified in the cauldron of Colonialist–Orientalist knowledge archive so as to ensure an abridged understanding—overlooking the complexities of South Asian population and vagaries of its different lifestyles—for the benefit of British administrators entrusted with policy-making and smooth functioning of the empire.<sup>1</sup> This consideration was of even more importance for an area like the Punjab marked with plural coexistence. A precarious population balance existed between Muslims and Hindus while Sikhs basked nostalgically in their recently lost glory as the rulers of Punjab and Christian missionaries strove hard on the margins to 'claim' this land for Jesus. The strategic significance of Punjab as the single most important recruiting ground of 'martial races' for the Imperial army, and its fertile agricultural land with feasible potentialities for an expansion of revenue base, further served to highlight the importance of a stable colonial order and administrative setup in Punjab.

These rearrangements opened up a completely new range of opportunities and at the same time posed fresh challenges to communities populating Punjab. The ushering in of a new economic-administrative order with British ascendancy concomitantly gave rise to a broad new associational patterning and organizational structuring in the realms of social interaction, self-perception, and group feeling among the communities. Old modes of interaction crumbled under the weight of

socio-political workings of the colonial regime. Alternatively, the British 'offering' of a 'neutral' public space was conceived by them as a competing arena in which communities—constellated on the basis of religion, caste, profession and so on—would vie with each other for prominence while remaining subject to rules of the game specified by the colonial authority. In this way, the colonized were impressed upon with the potential power of the colonizer—both real and perceived but never, in Ranajit Guha's words, 'hegemonic'<sup>2</sup>—to allocate resources, extend patronage and administer law.

As the British were attempting to identify their subjects and determine their approximate numbers, it became imperative for the communities under scrutiny to evolve effective methods of association and organization to reach out to the colonial distributors of resources by capturing a noticeable niche in the public space in order to preclude rival communities from making similar gains.<sup>3</sup> In line with the British mapping of these communities, the members themselves felt entrusted with the task of wearing a uniform outlook by rounding off variances and arbitrarily subsuming otherwise mutable or 'fuzzy'<sup>4</sup> peripheral groups under its fold. This concern for appropriation of identities in a community gave further impetus to the establishment of new groups and guilds on the basis of religion, kinship, caste or other such interests and considerations. An additional source of inspiration was provided by the so-called 'Dalhousian Revolution' whereby emergence of community representative groups not only became possible but was also deemed to be desirable. A better communication infrastructure in the form of well-connected railways and efficient postal system could facilitate assemblage of group members and maintenance of regular contacts. The advent of print afforded a new way of broadcasting one's views to a wider audience.

Accompanying these developments was the invasive influence of the Western education system 'proselytized' through government run schools and colleges, which propounded a vague concept of 'rationality' in challenging the tenets of prevalent religious traditions. A perceived threat from the Christian missionaries, operating allegedly in collusion with the British officials at some level, further heightened the mistrust of Punjabis in matters of religion. These Eurocentric canons of rationality and Judeo-Christian forms of 'higher religion' appeared two pronged threats undermining the cohesiveness of a community eventually diminishing its numbers and so bearing an impact on its socio-economic status and political relevance. A cumulative effect of these factors led to a mushrooming of a number of religion-based community groups, especially

among the Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab, with a concern for revision of certain aspects of faith for those among their clientele desirous of a more rational interpretation of religion to be self-assured of the superiority of their dogma above that of the others. There was also a pressing need for appropriation of identities so as to forge unity among the community members and swell its ranks in comparison to others. In doing so, these communities were simultaneously being abetted and limited by colonial structures of power and knowledge in place, and their actions created intertwined chains of reactions from rival communities, hence embroiling them further in competition with one another.

#### 4.3. THE BEGINNINGS OF RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSIES IN PUNJAB

Other than the direct takeover of Punjab by the British in 1849, a tangible aspect of the colonial polity was witnessed by the Punjabis in the shape of an enhanced missionary activity since the first launching of proselytizing mission in 1834 in Ludhiana by the American Presbyterians and later by Church Mission Society, Methodist Episcopal Missionaries and others. Within a few decades following the annexation of Punjab, these missions had expanded their work to emerging canal colonies and urban centres of Punjab like Sialkot, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Gurdaspur, Jhelum, and Lyallpur among other areas. The setting up of a printing press in Ludhiana in 1836 by American Presbyterian Mission introduced an alternative and more effective means of mass dissemination of Christian scriptures printed in vernaculars throughout Punjab. Between 1861 and 1871 alone the Ludhiana press had published 31 editions of Christian scriptures in Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi numbering 188,000 copies in total, along with 286 tracts and books with a total print numbering 1,346,675 copies.<sup>5</sup> Other than that, the missionaries established a number of educational institutes and hospitals in Punjab. The earliest missionary educational institution for boys was set up at Kotgarh near Simla in 1843 by the Church Missionary Society. The American Mission followed by establishing its first English medium school at Jalandhar in 1848 and in Lahore the next year.<sup>6</sup> Forman Christian College Lahore (formerly Lahore Mission College) and Murray College Sialkot emerged as two important centres for western learning in Punjab during the late nineteenth century run by the Christian Missions.

Mission schools and hospitals, along with freely available missionary literature in vernaculars, facilitated the missionary activity in Punjab and



allowed reaching out to especially those among the local communities condemned as outcastes—most importantly the *Chuhras* or the sweepers in the context of mission influence in Punjab—for the menial and lowly occupations they were associated with.<sup>7</sup> The results were startling for the missionaries themselves: a 410 per cent increase in Christian population of Punjab was witnessed as their total numbers swelled to 19,750 in 1891. By 1911, their population had risen up to 163,994.<sup>8</sup>

The conversion of even outcaste 'members' of a religious community was significant in overall impact since it diminished the total numbers of a community in the census reports, and suggested a lack of egalitarian-rational spirit in their religious doctrines and absence of organizational apparatuses to prevent the conversions from taking place. Successful missionary attempts to prey upon learned and influential members of the communities was a further source of embarrassment as the local religious traditions in their existing forms appeared unable to rationally satisfy the concerns of western educated 'graduates'. Events like the attempted *en masse* conversion of Sikh students of Amritsar Mission School in 1873 or Baptism in 1894 of Maulwi Hafiz Nabi Bakhsh of Muslim High School Amritsar, were of even more significance than the decennial publication of census reports. These cases aided in generating immense debate in the local press, and added to the intensity of polemical disputations taking place throughout Punjab between the clerics of different faiths. The high-profile converts helped project the image of Christian successes in establishing itself as a viable alternative in Punjab and, more importantly, a form of 'higher' religion more suitable to the concerns of a humane and informed believer.

The challenge posed by Christianity to local religious traditions of Punjab clearly demanded similar organizational responses along with modifications in some matters of faith to chalk out a successful counter-strategy for proselytization. In the context of Punjab, establishment of Arya Samaj in 1875 by Swami Dayanand (d. 1883) was indicative of a significant development in the religious traditions, especially Hinduism, as believed and practiced in Punjab. Dayanand tried to configure Hinduism closely to the dictates of a colonized polity and socio-religious traditions espoused by missionary groups. The key point in Dayanand's concept of a reformed Hinduism under the auspices of Arya Samaj was an emphasis on the Vedas as the bearer of central authority and authentic source of guidance for Hindu religion. This assertion in the centrality of Vedas served as Dayanand's vision of a standardized Hindu belief system and canonized ritual practices—in comparison to and a complete disregard

for the hoary sets of disparate beliefs and diverse practices of Hindus in the vast stretches of South Asia—to which one could refer to or proselytize to add new converts into its fold. In doing so, Dayanand was cognizant of the need to rely on Vedas as an authentic textual representation of the Hindu religion as a counter to the established scriptural representation of religions like Islam and Christianity.<sup>9</sup> In Dayanand's opinion: 'The Vedic truth as it existed in its pure form in the ancient past, unadulterated by latter day indigenous or foreign influences, was to be retrieved and emphasized as true Hindu faith. All must read the truth in its pure Vedic form and should the Vedas prove difficult to comprehend then Arya literature stood ready to explain and interpret them.'<sup>10</sup>

Other than complying with the tradition of textual representation as in Semitic religions, Swami Dayanand went further to rid Hinduism of its 'polytheistic' aspects targeted by the missionaries by arguing for an adherence to a rather monotheistic concept of a single, all-powerful deity.<sup>11</sup> An additional pressure emanating from the missionaries and other rival religious communities with which Arya Samaj had to cope with were certain 'objectionable' teachings and ideas which were being attributed to Hinduism. Earlier Ram Mohan Roy had sorted a way out by distinguishing between 'real Hindooism' and the superstitious practices that deformed the 'Hindoo religion' and had nothing to do with the 'pure spirit of its dictates.' In his quest for a more reasonable alternative to superstitious and Brahmanism dominated, ritualized Hinduism, Ram Mohan Roy ended up scrapping everything except Vedas and Upanishads, which he decreed to be the core of Hindu tradition, which in turn created a precedent for a later foregrounding of the Vedas by Swami Dayanand.<sup>12</sup> But Ram Mohan Roy's successor Devendranath Tagore found the 'idolatrous teachings' of Vedas incongruent with his own perceptions of a Supreme Being or Deity and abandoned it as the basis of religious authority for members of Tattvabodhini Sabha and Brahmo Samaj, to be replaced by reason and nature.<sup>13</sup> On the other extreme were Sanatan Dharmi groups who accorded canonical stature not only to Vedas but also Puranas, Tantras and a host of other Hindu devotional literature to argue in favour of more traditional form of Hinduism.

Swami Dayanand's belief in the Vedas as the eternal and infallible word of God as true representation of Hinduism required that all additional Hindu scriptures or devotional literatures should be summarily dismissed insofar as they contradicted the teachings of Vedas, and thus remove any vulnerability to scathing criticism of missionaries, non-Arya Hindus and other religious groups. As for the alleged polytheism, Brahmanized rituals

and traces of an asymmetrical caste society envisaged in Vedic texts, Swami Dayanand resorted to a revisionist reading of these texts to make them conform to his scheme of a monotheistic and de-Brahmanized Hindu religion with an egalitarian outlook. In this endeavour a reinterpretation of certain Vedic passages was as important as questioning the scriptural authority of the Puranas and other such texts.<sup>14</sup>

After having established Hinduism as derived from the teachings of Vedas, it became possible to proselytize it as a distinct religion as Arya Samaj's arbitrarily constructed uniform Hindu dogma and reductive understanding of its various aspects narrowed down the definition of a Hindu to a person believing in the teachings of Vedas. The undertaking of evangelical missions was not just to apprise the Hindus about 'true doctrines' of their faith but was also demanded by political expediences and economic compulsions. There was a growing anxiety among the Arya Samajis—and most of the other Hindu groups or movements that cropped up during this period—about dwindling numbers of the Hindus as suggested by census reports. The weakening of 'Hindu race' and decline in its numbers was understood as a phenomenon that had been in progress since the advent of Muslim rule in South Asia and escalating under the British.

With the teachings of Swami Dayanand serving as a rallying cry for a reformed, Vedic-only Hinduism and Arya Samaj being used as a platform and representative Hindu organization to propagate this new form of Hindu faith—a reversal of the conversion process was sought by targeting an audience comprising mainly of non-Arya Samaji Hindus or those who had converted to other religions, along with Muslims and Christians.<sup>15</sup> That the proselytizing of Hindu religion was a pioneering accomplishment on the part of Swami Dayanand and Arya Samaj is evident from the fact that traditionally Hinduism had lacked a conversion ritual, but the perception of a decline in the numbers of Hindus in Punjab was a stimulus powerful enough to allow for novel methods of initiating new members into the fold of Hinduism. One such ritual was *Shuddhi* or purification. One of the first reported *Shuddhi* was performed by Swami Dayanand in 1877 to a Hindu of Jalandhar who had converted to Christianity.<sup>16</sup> The earliest known *Shuddhi* of a Muslim dates back to the same year. A Muslim from Dehra Dun was administered with conversion rites by Dayanand and given a Hindu name of Alakhdhari.<sup>17</sup> On the whole, Arya Samaj's efforts met with moderate success as their numbers grew steadily to reach 92,419 in 1901<sup>18</sup> though it fell drastically short of a figure desired by them. The organizational expansion of Arya Samaj was,

however, more impressive as their affiliated branches spread widely to different parts of India. It was able to establish schools and colleges imparting Vedic and modern education.

One of the communities most affected by the religious controversies plaguing Punjab, especially the ones waged by Arya Samaj, was that of Sikhs. They not only had to cope with their recent loss of political authority in Punjab but also negotiate with threats to their existence as a separate religious entity. The Sikhs, like others, were being beset by the efforts of missionaries aimed at bringing about large-scale conversions, and, in addition, faced an increasingly offensive challenge from the Arya Samajis to subsume them under the category of *Hinduism* for religious and numerical purposes. The Arya Samaji literature was critical of revered Sikh figures including Baba Guru Nanak but at the same time emphasized the mutual religio-spiritual ancestry of the two religions in various tracts published and public disputations held. Further encroachments were made by Arya Samajis during the Shuddhi campaign of 1890s when Sikhs, mostly from the lower castes, were converted to Hinduism in public ceremonies of conversion with rituals involving cutting of hairs—a sacrilegious act in Sikhism. A similar effort, albeit at a much lesser scale and mostly as an exercise in academics, was made by individual Muslims who tried to present Baba Guru Nanak as a Muslim by citing 'credible historical evidences' in this regard.

In response to their opponent's exploitation of vaguely defined contours of Sikh religion and certain aspects of its teachings, there were varied interpretations of Sikh religious traditions by its adherents. In pre-1849 Punjab, there had already started a process of religious reform among the Sikhs as groups such as the Nirankaris and Namdharis strove to revitalize Sikhism's devotional spirit among the believers in their own different ways.<sup>19</sup> But it was the post-1849 period that witnessed a rapid growth of Sikh organizations named as Singh Sabhas which dealt with various questions facing the community by providing infrastructural groundings to promote a Sikh identity in accordance with their respective differentiated understandings of the Sikh tradition.

The first sabha was established in Amritsar in 1873. The purported aim of the organization was to restore the purity and glory of Sikhism by bringing about awareness among the Sikhs with the publication of books, tracts, and journals. The Lahore Singh Sabha which held its first meeting in 1879 had a similar agenda but with a more reformist and egalitarian outlook. The Lahore and Amritsar sabhas, along with dozens of such organizations established in most parts of Punjab, briefly allowed

themselves to be jointly overseen by a larger central body of Khalsa Diwan established in 1883 to be replaced by Chief Khalsa Diwan in 1902. By 1900 there were more than one hundred Singh Sabhas in Punjab and neighbouring areas without any unanimity on the question of defining a Sikh and determining Sikh religious traditions. They approached questions regarding idolatry, female education and caste system in accordance with their respective readings of the Sikh scriptures.

The issue of Sikhism's relation to Hinduism clearly seemed to be settling in favour of those championing a distinct Sikh identity to the loss of those who concurred with Arya Samajis and other Hindus in seeing Sikhism as an offshoot of a broadly defined Hinduism and derived from commonly respected scriptural sources. This was made possible by organizations such as Khalsa Tract Society founded in 1894 which regularly published didactic and polemical literature, evidenced by references from Sikh scriptures, to emphasize the non-Hindu nature of Sikhism.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the efforts undertaken by Professor Gurmukh Singh (d. 1898) and Bha'i Kaham Singh (d. 1938) in locating and publishing old texts, exploring hitherto unknown local biographies of Guru Nanak (*Janam Sakhis*) and ascertaining the relative credibility of these sources helped add to the confidence of the Sikhs in the veracity and richness of their religious literature and textually recorded documentation of its history. Research and publication bodies affiliated with Singh Sabhas ensured that authentic editions of *Janam Sakhis* and *Adi Granth* were brought out.<sup>21</sup> In this way Singh Sabha led initiatives for Sikhs resulted in the sharpening of a recognizable Sikh identity, afforded an organizational framework leading to the establishment of a number of schools and colleges for Sikhs, and opened up debate on various aspects of Sikh traditions in order to render it dogmatically compatible with the socio-religious milieu of colonial Punjab and shrug off attempts by rival communities to undermine the belief system and practices of Sikhism. From the plurality of views that emerged from these discourses on Sikhism, the British, however, gave credence and extended patronage to a rather militaristic variant of Khalsa Sikhs—who tallied with projected image of the Sikhs as one of the 'martial races' of Punjab—for their own administrative conveniences and fulfilment of colonialist objectives.



#### 4.4. MUSLIM REACTION TO RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSIES IN PUNJAB

The Muslim reaction to the religious controversies in Punjab was different insofar as it did not involve a significant effort to resolve the problematic of their distinct religious identity vis-à-vis Hindus and Sikhs. This does not, however, suggest that the Muslims of Punjab constituted a monolithic community or that religion alone defined their identity or determined the contours of community consciousness. Muslims too were a religious group constructed or perceived in the colonial logbooks as a community shot through with class, regional, linguistic, sectarian, and individual differences.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Muslims too were similarly cognizant of the dilemmas and challenges posed by colonial polity and socio-economic changes accompanying it, and faced the brunt of opposition from rival religious communities, especially Arya Samajis. The dynamics of their politics and discourse on the idea of 'reform' in religion was not so dissimilar from the rest. A number of voluntary organizations patronized by Muslim nobility and professionals came into existence to support modern and religious education of Muslims by building schools and colleges.<sup>23</sup> They also became actively involved in religious disputations and wrote polemical tracts<sup>24</sup> in order to forestall sporadic encroaching attempts to baptize the Muslims or to cajole them back to their 'original' Hindu roots.

Apart from missionaries who posed a 'common' threat to the local religious traditions of Punjab, Muslim religious rhetoric with regard to Hindus was noticeably more strained. A number of mutually acrimonious tracts were exchanged after the publication of Maulwi Isma'il's *Radd-i-Hunud* from Bombay followed by Maulwi 'Ubaydullah, a Hindu convert to Islam, who wrote *Tuhfa-tul-Hind* in 1874.<sup>25</sup> It was responded to by Munshi Indarman in his tract *Tuhfa-tul-Islam* published from Muradabad. A total of at least 15 tracts were exchanged between the contesting sides.<sup>26</sup> As this trend flourished, Swami Dayanand joined the fray by writing *Satyarath Parkash* whose contents were considered potentially offensive to Muslim sensitivities regarding their religion. The fourteenth chapter of Dayanand's book focusing on the Quran and some aspects of Islamic teachings was meant as an academic exercise in belittling the genuineness of non-Hindu religions to underline their untenability as a universal religion so as to reiterate the credibility of the Vedas as divine scriptures relevant to the dictates of modern times. In case of the Quran, Dayanand criticized its teachings which allegedly sanction violence, killing of non-



believers, sexual promiscuity, moral laxities, and encourage a certain kind of idolatry by centralizing the importance of the Ka'ba in prayer and pilgrimage performances. He concludes his criticism by saying that the Quran is neither the Book of God nor does it even qualify as the work of an erudite scholar.<sup>27</sup> Muslim scholars responded in kind by raising objections against the Vedas and drawing 'evidence' from its text to prove that the charges levelled against the Quran can more appropriately be levelled against the Vedas for its treatment of the same issues in an even more inhumane and irrational manner.<sup>28</sup> Dayanand's Vedic solution of *Niyoga* (levirate) to the question of widow remarriage was, in particular, repeatedly exploited by his opponents, often with ridicule and satire, as an example of the Veda's crass sexuality and hence a valid proof of its un-divine nature.

The religious debate had, hence, boiled down to an enumeration of scriptural authorities of competing religions on the basis of their historical veracity, rational compatibility and universal appeal. This trend invited fiery responses from competing religions. Lekh Ram (d. 1897), an Arya Samaji proselytizer, aggravated the religious controversies by penning provocative literature against Islam and its Prophet. In doing so, he was responding to a spate of similar writings by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad—the founder of messianic Ahmadiyya movement and other Muslim polemicists. In dealings with his Muslim rivals, Lekh Ram was concerned less about proving the Vedas as the central exponent of Hinduism than to disqualify the Quran as a divine text in accordance with the criterion laid down by him. According to that criterion, a Book had to be devoid of supernatural events contrary to human reason and partiality towards any particular community or group of followers in order to qualify the status of divinity.<sup>29</sup> In addition to lacking a rational and universalistic spirit, the Quran was considered by Lekh Ram as historically less credible than the Vedas. Lekh Ram built this argument on the basis of reports found in both Sunni and Shi'a Ahadith to the effect that parts of Quranic text had been lost. In the same vein Lekh Ram's portrayal of Islam as a religion of murder, theft, slavery, and perverse sexual acts<sup>30</sup> is derived from traditionally revered Muslim texts of classical exegesis and other juridical-theological writings. When reminded by his Muslim counterparts of sexual indulgences of Krishan with *gopis* and vanities of various Hindu rituals, Lekh Ram discounted the criticism by re-emphasizing the Arya doctrine of dissociation from non-Vedic Hindu texts.

#### 4.5. THE 'APOSTASY' OF GHAZI MEHMUD DHARAMPAL (d. 1960)

In order for newly emerged groups to claim credence as true representatives of their respective religions and boost the confidence of their followers in the articles of faith expounded by them, it was necessary to make efforts—other than just arguing in terms of historicity of the sacred text or its rational-universalistic teachings—for mass conversions into the fold of one's religion or to strive for cases of high-profile conversions. In the latter case such individuals could then be taken around and presented during religious disputations and publicized through journals and newspapers as living examples of the successful efforts made by the group for the promotion of religion and in establishing its genuineness.

One such case of high-profile conversion, which in case of Arya Samaj considerably substantiated their credibility and exemplified the success of their proselytizing efforts in favour of Hindu religion, was that of Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal's adoption of Hinduism. Ghazi Mehmud's original name was Abdul Ghafur. He was born in Hoshiarpur in 1882. During his formative years he developed a sceptical outlook regarding Islam and undertook a comparative study of religions to arrive at the true one. What weakened his previously staunch belief in Islam was an incident during the early years of his life. According to Ghazi Mehmud, he once listened to a Friday prayer sermon in which the speaker said that true believers are blessed with a magnificent vision in the last days of the Muslim month of Ramazan. Ghazi Mehmud studiously observed his prayers and spent sleepless nights in the hope of receiving such a vision. Failing to receive one, he became sceptical and as a way of soul searching, he started reading the biographies and teachings of reformers, saints, and prophets.<sup>31</sup> This religious introspection brought him closer, at first, to Dev Samajis.<sup>32</sup> They, in turn, supported Ghazi Mehmud by financing his academic pursuits as well. By 1899, Ghazi Mehmud had ceased to be a practicing Muslim as is evident through his letters in which he attached Dharampal to his name and used the Hindu greeting of *namaste*<sup>33</sup> with his brother. He remained a Dev Samaji, and registered himself as one in the census, till at least 1901 before shunning contact with them on account of their alleged malpractices and false beliefs. His opponents, however, accused him of switching because he had lost ground among both the Muslims and Dev Samajis, and required financial support.<sup>34</sup>

When Ghazi Mehmud came into contact with the Arya Samajis while he was serving as a school teacher in Gujranwala, he displayed inclinations

towards embracing Hinduism after being convinced of the truthfulness of the Aryan principles of religion. By 1903, Ghazi Mehmud had turned twenty-one and so there could be no legal bar on him to formally declare his renunciation of Islam and initiation into Hinduism, and change his name from Abdul Ghafur to Dharampal. But Ghazi Mehmud objected to the term *Shuddhi* being used for his conversion to Hinduism because it implied that he was being transformed from a ritual state of impurity to that of purity. With some reluctance, the Arya Samaji organizers of the event acquiesced to his demands and a mutually acceptable term of *pardesh* (entry) was adopted. Also, Ghazi Mehmud would not allow the shaving of his head as part of the conversion ritual. But conceding to this demand of his would have led to embarrassment on the part of the Arya Samajis in the eyes of their rival Hindu sects. A compromise was reached whereby Ghazi Mehmud was to wear a turban in order to cover his hair.<sup>35</sup> The whole event was publicized well in advance so as to attract maximum attention and continued to be trumpeted in the press as the living example of Arya Samaj's successful representation of Hinduism. It was a rather theatrical display of ritual performances orchestrated by Arya Samajis with Ghazi Mehmud playing his part by reading out a lengthy polemical speech the teachings of Islam.

Ghazi Mehmud's charge sheet against Islam in his lecture titled *Tark-i-Islam* (Renunciation of Islam)<sup>36</sup> was a reiteration of the critique made by Swami Dayanand. It followed Dayanand's format of delivering lectures by quoting a Quranic verse and then criticizing the contents or injunctions of it with satirical comments. His main thrust of argument against the Quran rested mostly on the concepts regarding God, cosmology, supernaturalism, rights of women, Jihad and the Hereafter described in its text.

In addition, he wrote a number of other monographs criticizing the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), particularly matters relating to his private life, along with numerous other aspects of Islam. In his writings, Ghazi Mehmud does not figure as an astute scholar of Islam or that of its classical texts. In many instances his understanding of the Quran is either simplistic or out rightly flawed though effective enough to raise doubts among those believers who possessed a superficial knowledge of the Quran. His works were equally valuable for those among the Arya Samaj who sought reaffirmation of the superiority of their own faith with the testimony of a former Muslim. In consequence, despite the evidently flawed reasoning and deficient knowledge in Ghazi Mehmud's works, they were widely challenged by numerous Muslim scholars. In all,

no less than thirty books were written in response to different works of Ghazi Mehmud.<sup>37</sup> Most prominent among them were the monographs penned by Sana'ullah Amritsari, the fiery Ahl-i-Hadith polemicist and editor of weekly *Ahl-i-Hadith*, and Hakim Nur-ud-Din, the leader of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's Ahmadiyya Jama'at after his death. Both were trained religious scholars with years of experience in polemical disputations with rival Muslims sects as well as the Hindus. Sana'ullah Amritsari, especially, had a thorough understanding of the Hindu scriptures as well.<sup>38</sup> Sana'ullah Amritsari rebutted Ghazi Mehmud's objections by two means: (1) he pointed out the flaws in his counterpart's understanding of the Quranic text by citing the rules of Arabic grammar and other lexicographical references;<sup>39</sup> (2) Sana'ullah compared the Quranic verses deemed objectionable by Ghazi Mehmud with corresponding references from the Vedas to either emphasize the similarity between the two regarding a particular injunction, or to justify the excellence and practicality of former's ruling over and above that of latter's in dealing with some issue discussed by both.<sup>40</sup> The same was done by Hakim Nur-ud-Din in his treatise against Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal.

Ghazi Mehmud remained actively involved in the activities of Arya Samaj and regularly visited the religious gatherings and polemics organized by them. He even published his own journal *Indar* to propagate Arya Samaji Hinduism. His association with Arya Samaj gradually came to an end after his marriage to a Brahman widow Gayan Devi. The marriage raised opposition for it was concluded between a non-Brahman with a widow senior to him in age. Since his marriage with Gayan Devi was not sanctioned by Arya Samaj nor was there an assurance of respectable status for his children borne by her, Ghazi Mehmud published and widely circulated an appeal to scholars of all religions pleading which religion could guarantee the rights of his wife and children without discrimination.<sup>41</sup> In response, Qazi Sulayman Mansurpuri (d. 1930)—a learned Ahl-i-Hadith scholar and a session judge in the princely state of Patiala—wrote back to him declaring that the couple were lawfully wedded and their children had equal rights in every aspect even if their mother chose to remain Hindu. Such a positive response prompted Ghazi Mehmud to visit Qazi Sulayman and re-embrace Islam in 1914.<sup>42</sup>

From 1914 henceforth Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal took out a number of journals and was actively involved against the Arya Samajis during the *Shuddhi* campaigns of 1920s. But even though he became a Muslim, his understanding of the religion remained unconventional as he tilted toward the Ahl al-Qur'an—especially in his views on Ahadith which were

denounced by him due to their graphic details of the Prophet's marital life.<sup>43</sup> He was also critical of the approach of the Ulama who insisted upon strict adherence to the minutest details prescribed by the Sunnat for ritual observances of Islam. He considered it unnecessary to perform ablution or follow any schematic ritual order for the offering of prayers. In his view, the Quran sanctioned the believer to offer his prayers at any time and in any order deemed fit by him. That Allah Himself had refrained from specifying the details of Namaz was taken by him as evidence of their insignificance.<sup>44</sup> This clearly shows the proximity of his new ideas regarding Islam with those of some Ahl al-Qur'an groups, especially the one founded by Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari. It is no wonder then that Ahl al-Qur'an groups claimed Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal as one of their members and that his 'apostasy' came to an end because of a monograph<sup>45</sup> written by Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi (d. 1916)—the founder of Ahl al-Qur'an movement in Lahore and the first person in modern Muslim history to denounce Hadith literature in totality.

#### 4.6. THE ORIGINS OF AHL AL-QUR'AN MOVEMENT IN LAHORE

Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's idea of the rejection of the entire corpus of Hadith literature (*Inkar-i-Hadith*) and exposition of the idea of Quranic comprehensiveness and excellence as the only required divine source of religious guidance for the Muslims, appears to be located in the context of late nineteenth century religious controversies resonating in the Punjab. Such an approach was in line with the growing trend among the adherents of different religious traditions in Punjab to specify the scriptural authority of their respective religions and insist that it was the only valid Divine text. In case of Arya Samaj and several Sikh groups, this endeavour was driven from a concern for recasting the basis of faith in a reformed mould; as much as it was inspired by the need to conform to Judeo-Christian conceptualizations of religion or to establish a distinct religion-based identity sharply demarcated from the rest. In narrowing down the scriptural basis of religion—whether to Vedas or Adi Granth—they did not simply seek a rallying point for the assemblage of believers but also a historically credible text whose Divine excellence could be argued in rational, humane and universalistic jargons. In case of Islam there was no ambiguity in the minds of believers regarding Quran's status as the final and the most excellent of God's Scriptures. What Maulwi 'Abdullah aspired for was strict adherence to the Quran alone as the only required source of religious guidance for the Muslims to the exclusion of



all other textual accretions whether in the form of Hadith or classical Quranic commentaries and theological-juridical writings, i.e. Isnad paradigm, which—by the virtue of their authorship by most learned scholars of Islam with widely accepted authority among the Muslims—have come to acquire a revered referential status disallowing a fresh look into or direct recourse to the Quran. This Quran-only approach introduced by Maulwi 'Abdullah was not so dissimilar to that of Swami Dayanand's (1824–83) Veda-based Hinduism when it came to defending the religion from accusations of inhumanity, sexual perversity and irrationality. While Dayanand, the founder of Arya Samaj, objected to extra-Vedic sources like the Puranas for their objectionable content, Maulwi 'Abdullah's tirades were reserved mostly for Hadith collections.

'Abdullah Chakralawi's religious background and training as a scholar suggest evidence of sequential progression toward a faith in the unity of God and a scripturalist understanding of Islam. He was born in a small village Chakralah near Mianwali in Punjab and named Qazi Ghulam Nabi. His father Qazi Nur Alam was a disciple of Allah Bakhsh Taunswi (1826–1901) which suggests that in his early life Maulwi 'Abdullah must have believed in intercessional authority of a spiritual guide and other custom-specific features of Barelwi Islam. Little else is known about Ghulam Nabi's early years and education except for the fact that at some later stage in his life he came under the influence of the Ahl-i-Hadith teachings. It has also been reported that he received instruction in Hadith from the famous Ahl-i-Hadith scholar Nazir Husain and, for some time, from Maulwi Nur-ud-Din<sup>46</sup> who later went on to become the successor of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. So profound was the overhauling of Maulwi 'Abdullah's religious worldview under the influence of these scholars that he found fault with each of his previous dogmas and practices, and even his own name Ghulam Nabi—which literally means 'slave of the Prophet'—was considered polytheistic by him,<sup>47</sup> and hence he changed his name to 'Abdullah, the 'Slave of Allah'. This coupled with the fact that he, as an Ahl-i-Hadith, was averse to accepting the authority of classical jurists of Islam in matters of religious guidance; indicate an assertive readiness to make substantial amends and radical transformations in his views on matters pertaining to faith.

Before embarking on an hitherto unexplored approach towards Islam, Maulwi 'Abdullah was a staunch Ahl-i-Hadith who upheld the authority of the authentic books of Hadith along with that of the Quran. This is reflected in his letter addressed to Maulwi Allah Yar Khan of Dera Ismail Khan dating back to 1886 in which Maulwi 'Abdullah talked about the



attributes of God while furnishing arguments from classical Tafsir works and authentic Hadith collections.<sup>48</sup> That Maulwi 'Abdullah continued to adhere to authentic Ahadith as late as 1899 is borne by the fact that in his first volume of Tafsir published in that year while he was residing in Sialkot, he expressed the view that a number of Quranic teachings dealing with matters of belief and everyday practices were taught and explained by the Prophet for which it had been made binding for all to be obedient to the Prophet. He held the opinion that it was by following the footsteps of the Prophet that one could come close to acquiring knowledge of innate human instincts and achieving justice and balance in one's own life.<sup>49</sup> Even when he finally proclaimed the excellence and sufficiency of the Quran to the extent of rejecting the Isnad paradigm, he is reported to have been supportive of traditions from *Bukhari* before Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari prevailed upon him to change his mind.<sup>50</sup> Even if Ahmad-ud-Din's reported influence on Maulwi 'Abdullah is more of a fabrication on the part of former's adherents in a bid to project him as the pioneer of *Inkar-i-Hadith* trend, it cannot be denied that Maulwi 'Abdullah did not outrightly reject all Hadith in one stroke. It appears that he had been planning to come up with his own version of Islam for some time. For this reason he had come under the attention of Punjab police's intelligence which regularly reported his activities from 1896 onwards. As early as 1900, Maulwi 'Abdullah was reported to have lectured against the doctrines of other Sunnis<sup>51</sup> and by 1901 he had introduced 'new religious forms' at the Chiniyan Wali mosque in Lahore<sup>52</sup> where he had been serving as an Imam (prayer leader) for some years. Chiniyan Wali mosque was built by one of Aurangzeb's nobles, Nawab Sarfaraz Khan, and it later became one of the most important 'prayer centres for the Ahl-i-Hadith sect. After Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi made a public announcement of his 'heretical' views, efforts were made to expel him from the mosque. Abdul Jabbar Ghaznawi, a scion of the famous Ghaznawi family of Ahl-i-Hadith scholars of Amritsar, successfully brought about the expulsion of Maulwi 'Abdullah from the mosque and replaced him with his own brother Abdul Wahid Ghaznawi.<sup>53</sup>

The controversy started when Maulwi 'Abdullah, while he was still the Imam at the Chiniyan Wali mosque, deviated from the Muslim practice of reciting the standard, prescribed recitations during the Namaz. He justified this act on the basis of different recitations to be found in Hadith books for various postures of Namaz. The ones he had picked up were Quranic verses and were mentioned in the Hadith books and hence considered permissible by him as alternatives to what was generally being

recited by other Muslims. As the dispute became intense, the opponents of Maulwi 'Abdullah started organizing their separate congregational prayers in the same mosque. This dual offering of Namaz lasted only briefly as Maulwi 'Abdullah was soon expelled from the mosque and established one of his own in the nearby area.<sup>54</sup> The establishment of a separate mosque by Maulwi 'Abdullah and his financier-disciple Shaykh Muhammad Chittu<sup>55</sup> (d. 1911) took place in 1903 as they were erroneously reported to have started a new religion in which they 'refuse to acknowledge Muhammad (ﷺ) as the Prophet of God and urge the disuse of the *Kalma* [the profession of faith].'<sup>56</sup>

Between Maulwi 'Abdullah's first public denunciation of major portions of Hadith in 1900–01 and his ostracization from the rest of the Muslim groups in 1902–03, he was engaged in written polemics with leading scholars of Ahl-i-Hadith. Among the scholars who challenged his ideas, the most prominent one was Muhammad Husayn Batalawi—the editor of influential Ahl-i-Hadith journal *Isha'at-us-Sunnat*. In an essay published in 1902, Batalawi detailed the ideas of Maulwi 'Abdullah with the aim of rebutting them,<sup>57</sup> and enlisted those ones in which Maulwi 'Abdullah had digressed from the opinion held by the majority Ulama for centuries. These included a disbelief in the abrogation of Quranic verses or even the Torah and the Bible; intercession of the prophets; and impeccability of their actions. With regard to Quran and Hadith, Batalawi reported Maulwi 'Abdullah's beliefs as follows:

All religious commandments are to be found in the Quran with details and explanations. There is no need of Hadith. If a Hadith has a commandment which is not to be found in the Quran or is in addition to it, then it is not worthy of trust. The designation of the Prophet is at par with that of a postman. He just simply delivers the post. It does not behoove the designation and right of the Prophet to proselytize in matters of details and interpretation of religion from anything other than the Quran.<sup>58</sup>

Authentic Hadith are not worthy of trust. Even Ahadith from *Bukhari* are not reliable. We (that is Chakralawi *Khan Bahadur* himself) argue on the basis of Hadith from *Bukhari* in order to offer bones to dogs so as to shut the mouth of Ahl-i-Hadith who believe in the authenticity of *Sahih Bukhari*. As far as we (that is Chakralawi *Khan Bahadur* himself) are concerned, books of *Sihab Satta* deserve to be burned.<sup>59</sup>

Maulwi 'Abdullah's ideas about the comprehensiveness of the Quranic text and the non-desirability of Hadith amounted to a wholesale rejection of the vast corpus of Hadith literature, though it still fell short of his more extreme views on this issue that took shape during the proceedings of his written polemic with Batalawi. Up till the time of his polemic with Batalawi, Maulwi 'Abdullah believed in the authenticity of some portions of Hadith literature. But his definition of an 'authentic Hadith' differed from the rest, insofar, as he considered it as a statement or act of the Prophet related to some aspect of the Quran and not wholly separated from it. It was in the context of this 'definition' of Hadith, that Maulwi 'Abdullah ascribed to the Prophet's statements an equivalent status as an explanation of the Quran; and relegated his actions under the category of its exegesis.<sup>60</sup> This 'definition' did not add significantly to the status of the Prophet or his words and actions as all the essential commandments pertaining to articles of faith and practices were, in Maulwi 'Abdullah's opinion, comprehensively touched upon in the Quran, and that the Ahadith did not add anything new to what had already been specified by the Quran. Hadith was dependent upon Quranic verses for the veracity of its own historicity and to avoid incongruity between the text of Hadith and that of the Quran. This led Maulwi 'Abdullah to conclude that the relation between the Quran and Hadith was more of an explanatory nature; while the wording of the two may be different but the content was essentially the same.<sup>61</sup>

The foremost question that immediately cropped up in the polemic between Maulwi 'Abdullah and Batalawi was concerned with the religious status of those edicts which had been ordained in Hadith alone without a trace of evidence to be found in any of the Quranic verses. Accordingly, Batalawi challenged his opponent to elaborate upon his understanding of the stated dictum of the 'comprehensiveness of the Quranic text'. In the case where the sphere of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) authority in matters of belief was to be accepted and revered, it had to be accepted that a variety of issues which had been left out in the Quran, or at best tangentially referred to, were elaborated upon by the Prophet with his divinely inspired words and actions in the form of *wahi ghayr matlu*. Maulwi 'Abdullah, in his response, could not have endorsed such a concept about the authority of the Prophet and the inadequacy of the Quran. In his response he reiterated his ideas regarding the comprehensiveness of the Quran, and declared its text as a repository of all the required details—whether binding, recommendatory or supererogatory—about faith and religious practices. Nothing that was related to faith and

practice had not been covered by the Quran, and none of its details required elucidation with the aid of externally supplemented literature. Hence, there was no requirement for Hadith or *wahi ghayr matlu*.<sup>62</sup> The Quran being an 'exposition of all things' (Quran, 16: 89) did not need any extraneous exegetary material, even if this material alluded to a continuous practice (*sunnat-i-mutwatir*) or an authentic saying (*sahih hadith*) of the Prophet. But as Maulwi 'Abdullah's later writings displayed, as well, he was cognizant of the fact that the comprehensiveness of the Quran could only be secured at the expense of limiting the essentials of religion to those matters alone which had been discussed in its text. Therefore it was not only the authority of the Prophet that came under curtailment but also the scope of religious activities on the whole that otherwise, with the aid of Hadith, encompasses almost a complete range of human activities: from directives of toilet etiquettes to instructions for bathing a dead body before burial.

It was simple for Batalawi to expose the fallacy of an approach that left wide-open informational gaps on several religious issues of concern for Muslims in their everyday affairs. Batalawi drafted one such list of religious queries and challenged Maulwi 'Abdullah to provide Quranic answers for them. Maulwi 'Abdullah offered Quranic explanation for some of the questions raised. An example of that is the 'evidence' cited by him regarding the impermissibility of marrying one's wife's maternal and paternal aunts. Batalawi's argument was that while the Quran prohibits contracting marriage with two sisters at the same time, it is from the Hadith that one receives guidance about marital ties with other close relations of one's wife. In his response, Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi referred to the relevant verse of the Quran (4: 23) and interpreted it to the effect that the stated prohibition was broadly extendable to disallow marriage with any two women whose relationship with each other was like sisters in terms of intimacy and bonding. In the light of this interpretation of the verse, he barred marriage with maternal or paternal grandmothers of one's wife as well.<sup>63</sup> Even if Maulwi 'Abdullah had stretched the meaning of the verse to force a derivation, his argument was still premised on a Quranic verse. There were many other questions addressed to him by the Ulama for which no Quranic verse could be found as even remotely relevant to the issue highlighted. For such issues about which no 'Quranic arguments' could be furnished, Maulwi 'Abdullah conveniently set them aside by projecting them as not being of any direct concern or practice.

With 'Abdullah Chakralawi's theological challenge extending beyond disregard for *tarawih* prayers and mandatory salutations to be recited during Namaz, Muhammad Husayn Batalawi mobilized the opinion of his contemporary Ulama against the excesses of the former Ahl-i-Hadith Imam (prayer leader). Batalawi had earlier taken the initiative in case of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>64</sup> for the latter's allegedly false claim of Prophethood and brought about a consensus of Ulama to declare him a *kafir* (infidel). Batalawi made similar efforts with regard to 'Abdullah Chakralawi and his religious views. In a questionnaire distributed among the Ulama of Punjab and beyond, Batalawi asked for their comments on a person who blasphemously disrespects the prophets—especially Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)—by comparing them to a postman only entitled to relaying the message without adding anything on his own; denies a belief in their infallibility and sinlessness; along with an utter disregard for his words and action as compiled and reported in Hadith collections.<sup>65</sup> Prominent Ulama, of all major sects from all across South Asia, including such stalwarts as Nazir Husayn Dehlawi were unanimous in their condemnation of 'Abdullah Chakralawi and his ideas. He was branded, along with his followers as an apostate although Batalawi hastened to add an editor's note to these religious decrees observing that prescribed capital punishment for an apostate can only be meted out by Islamic rulers in Shari'at courts and no individual was to be allowed such an undertaking.<sup>66</sup>

In 1903 Shaykh Chittu's financial assistance had enabled Maulwi 'Abdullah to assemble his limited number of followers in a compound near Chiniyan Wali mosque in the Siriyān Wala Bazar in Lahore. The mosque was also being used by him to bring out a journal whereby he could broadcast his ideas on the Quran and Hadith.<sup>67</sup> This journal, titled as Isha'at-ul-Qur'an, started its publication in 1903 and remained intermittently in circulation, at least, till 1932. It was published under the auspices of Anjuman Ahl al Zikr wa'l Qur'an with Maulwi 'Abdullah and his followers styling themselves as Ahl al-Qur'an. The stated aim of the journal was to disseminate the teachings of the Quran and spread the idea among Muslims that the Quran alone was sufficient for religious guidance. Patronage offered by some nobles of Dera Ismail Khan—especially Nawab Allah Dad Khan<sup>68</sup> and Nawaz Ahmad Khan<sup>69</sup>—enabled Maulwi 'Abdullah to write, print and distribute various themes of 'Quranic Islam' in a bid to increase the numbers of his followers and reach out to a wider Muslim audience.



#### 4.7. MAULWI 'ABDULLAH CHAKRALAWI'S NEW PROPHETOLOGY

Maulwi 'Abdullah's 'heretical' views on Hadith had, in fact, further strengthened the belief of the scholars opposing his views about the veracity of Hadith for it appeared to be fulfilling a prophecy of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who is reported to have remarked: 'Never do I (wish to) see any of you reclining on his couch, and (whenever) an injunction out of my instructions concerning that which I have enjoined him or prohibited comes to him, he says: I don't know. What we have found in the Book of Allah, we have followed.'<sup>70</sup> This Hadith has been quoted by numerous critics of Maulwi 'Abdullah. Many among those who have alluded to the above quoted Hadith, claim to have read it out in the presence of Maulwi 'Abdullah to prove to him that Hadith has a divine inspiration and an authentic standing. When one such critic, Nur-ud-Din, narrated this Hadith to Maulwi 'Abdullah, the latter is reported to have become angry and abused the Muhaddithun.<sup>71</sup> But the contents of Maulwi 'Abdullah's writings suggest that an effort was made to present a positive image of the person prophesized in the above quoted Hadith. What had been described in the Hadith—claimed one article in *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an*—was an apt description of caliph 'Umar who held the Book of Allah in his hand when he denounced the authority of the Hadith on the Prophet's death-bed. The Hadith in question could not have referred to any negative figure propounding erroneous beliefs.<sup>72</sup>

Such detractive interpretations for Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's 'motives'—both by his proponents and opponents—overlook the peculiar historical context which his rejection of Hadith appears to spring from. As already noted, Maulwi 'Abdullah was reacting to growing calls for scriptural authenticity among followers of different faiths and was also concerned about shielding Islam and its teachings from the slings of opponents basing their arguments on works of Hadith and other classical literature on Islamic law, theology and jurisprudence. Hence, in his overall vision of Islam, Maulwi 'Abdullah was seeking to redefine and determine the role of the Prophet and that of his recorded teachings and sayings in Hadith literature. Maulwi 'Abdullah's impetus for projecting the supremacy of the Quran as the sole source of religious guidance derived itself from the need to undermine Hadith literature on account of its perceived inferiority in terms of historical accuracy and veracity of its contents and a staunch belief in favour of comprehensiveness and excellence of the Quran as the only Divine text worthy of respect.



Unlike other ideologues of Ahl al-Qur'an who followed him, Maulwi 'Abdullah was not only the pioneer of Quran-only approach but also went a long way in meeting the challenge of Hadith proponents for drawing all the essential beliefs and practices of Islam solely from the Quran to the complete exclusion of Hadith literature and other classical works of Tafsir and jurisprudence. Accordingly, Maulwi 'Abdullah laid down the principles according to which the text of the Quran was to be understood and its supremacy over the rest emphasized. The crux of his Quran-only approach was premised on the assertion that the Quran as the divine word of God was the source of spiritual guidance and moral purification for all creations of the universe. Given its universalistic appeal and eternal relevance, it was only natural that the Quran had been furnished with all the required details relevant to this purpose. A necessary corollary of the stated purpose of the Quran was that there should not be any contradiction in its passages insofar as 'natural law' and human instincts innate in human species were concerned, nor anything narrated therein should turn out to be counter to known facts.<sup>73</sup> Such a view about the content and teachings of the Quran necessitated a disbelief in any other divine source of guidance and an emphatic assertion of the impeccability of Quranic text in terms of its historicity and rationality, and comprehensiveness of its teachings regarding all aspects of faith and ritual.

At a time when Maulwi 'Abdullah had not come up with his commentary of the Quran or book on 'Qurani Namaz', his ideas mentioned above were published in *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* in the form of articles. These earlier writings by him were incorporated into his later published works. Maulwi 'Abdullah began his treatise referring to verses that mention the Quran as a comprehensive source of guidance for people of all times.<sup>74</sup> In the presence of a Divine guide, i.e. the Quran, Maulwi 'Abdullah found it illogical that a parallel Divine authority should exist, for it amounted to mitigating the significance or highlighting the inadequacy of the Divine source. Such an arrangement was also untenable as, according to Maulwi 'Abdullah's Quranic exegesis, the Quran did not allude to a source of *Wahi* other than itself from which could emanate a parallel source of divine guidance. This accorded a Divine status to the Quran alone. As for those verses which had been understood by majority of Ulama as referring to a second type of Divine authority and justified an unflinching obedience to the dictates of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Maulwi 'Abdullah introduced his differentiated understanding of the Prophet's role and authority in the context of Quranic teachings.

According to him, the explanations given of the Prophet practically implementing the dictates of the Quran was a misunderstood interpretation of verses that are quoted to be in accordance to this interpretation. There are three different 'sets' of verses which are of relevance here:

1. Verses 16:44<sup>75</sup> which are interpreted as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to be cast in the mould of being the sole interpreter of the Quran, while in 'actual' sense, as understood by Maulwi 'Abdullah, these verses refer only to the normal Prophetic duty of informing the people about the Divine revelation.<sup>76</sup>
2. Another verse<sup>77</sup> mentions the Prophet as the recipient of the Book and Wisdom, with the latter term understood as referring to his Sunnat. Such an understanding of the term *hikmat*, as mentioned in the Quranic verse, was disputed by Maulwi 'Abdullah on the basis of lack of supporting evidence from authentic Arabic lexicographic works and verses from the Quran itself, which, on the contrary, made use of this term in the synonymous sense of Book of Allah.<sup>78</sup>
3. But most important for Maulwi 'Abdullah and other likeminded individuals were those verses<sup>79</sup> in which the Quran spoke in unequivocal terms of the need for abiding by the Prophet.

That a religious authority had been ordained to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by the virtue of his status as the Prophet of God, was dismissed by Maulwi 'Abdullah on two counts. It clashed with those verses of the Quran which barred associating partners with God in dictating religious edicts and contradicted Quranic image of the Prophet as a messenger without any special entitlements to impose religious commandments of his own.<sup>80</sup> As for the 'real' meaning of the verse in question, Maulwi 'Abdullah disregarded the generally agreed understanding of the term 'messenger' in this context as a reference to the Prophet and insisted that the implied meaning of the term was, instead, to be considered as referring to the Book of Allah. He justified this interpretation on the basis that verses quoted in support of Muhammad's authority were applicable to all the believers, including the Prophet himself. If this were not the case then the logical conclusion to be drawn was that the Prophet was excluded from all those verses addressing the community of believers as a whole. This was tantamount to absolving the Prophet from all those commandments, including that of offering prayer and so on, which had

been made binding on the believers.<sup>81</sup> Alternatively, if Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was to be considered part of those addressed in the verse, i.e. the 'category' of '*O ye who believe*'—then it should be accepted that the Prophet was being commanded to be obedient to some other prophet about whom no clue had been given. This, along with the use of word *Rusul* in the sense of 'Book' in other verses of the Quran, led Maulwi 'Abdullah to conclude that Believers had been decreed to obey the only source of Divine knowledge, i.e. the Quran.<sup>82</sup> Such an interpretation enabled Maulwi 'Abdullah to establish that there did not exist a parallel Divine source other than the Quran and helped define a diminished role for the Prophet.

While Maulwi 'Abdullah mitigated the significance of the Prophet's role in matters of faith, he—with clear contradiction to his stated views on the authority of prophets—did not deny to them the power to perform miracles and to act or be endowed with supernatural qualities. Still, their supra-human personage neither qualified them for any divine guidance other than that in the form of revealed scripture nor made them infallible<sup>83</sup> or privileged in observance of religious duties.<sup>84</sup> He, however, did acknowledge the noble origins and prestige of all the prophets. For him, it was sacrilegious to utter that Ishmael's mother and Abraham's wife Hagar was a concubine as it established Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) genealogical links with a concubine. Also, he considered it as a calumny on Abraham that he was forced by his wife Sara to go and abandon his wife Hagar and son Ishmael in the desert. This presented Sara as a callous woman driven by her jealousy of Hagar, and Abraham as a hen-pecked husband not being able to resist his wife's unreasonable demands.<sup>85</sup>

Maulwi 'Abdullah's appraisal of the Quranic stories, hence, was aimed at projecting a noble image of the prophets stripped of accretions from Judeo-Christian traditions and description of their supernatural acts with some editing. For instance he did not believe that the followers of Moses were sheltered from sunlight by clouds gathering above them nor did God send down food from the heavens for their consumption. Similarly, in Maulwi 'Abdullah's opinion, Moses, in Pharaoh's court, did not transform the rod in his hands into a serpent so as to stun magicians who had been gathered to challenge him, but simply presented the teachings he had received from God in front of the audience to excite their awe and appreciation.<sup>86</sup> But Maulwi 'Abdullah's belief in the supernatural powers of the prophets becomes most clearly manifested in his treatise on Jesus in which he indirectly makes a satirical reference to Sayyid Ahmad Khan and other followers of the 'law of nature' for failing to appreciate the

miracles of Jesus' birth and later events of his life and disbelieving in his second coming. Maulwi 'Abdullah rationalized the second coming of Jesus on the basis of the Quranic verse (3:46) which says: 'He will speak unto mankind in his cradle and in his manhood, and he is of the righteous.'

The prophecy of Jesus talking in his cradle, while still an infant, was considered by Maulwi 'Abdullah as indicative of a supernatural act. The latter part of the verse, however, was understood by him as not referring to Jesus conversing with others as all normal individuals do after a certain age, but to his speaking to mankind on the Day of Judgment when he would manifest himself to them by coming into the open from his hiding abode.<sup>87</sup> A clear contradiction in Maulwi 'Abdullah's concept of prophetology can be discerned in the sense that he invests no special authority to the prophets in matters of religion for they are considered by him as ordinary human beings; yet, simultaneously, he is not averse to the idea of prophets being endowed with supernatural faculties.

#### 4.8. QURANIC EXCELLENCE VS. HADITH INFERIORITY

Although Maulwi 'Abdullah did take the lead in presenting a differentiated understanding of the religious authority of the prophets, he did not follow his radical revision of the role and status of the Prophet by an attendant systematic appraisal of the historicity of the Hadith literature or its content underlining that authority.<sup>88</sup> Hadith literature were given an inferior status in the writings of Maulwi 'Abdullah through a reiteration of the excellence of the Quran on account of its inimitable style and historical-authentic preservation, and for this premise, he cited evidence from and the Quran itself. The Quran claims a uniqueness of style and excellence of contents unmatched by any other work produced by man, as proof of its own divinity. This served as the basis for Maulwi 'Abdullah's arguments in favour of the Quran being the only source of guidance and Hadith not being inclusive in this category. He pointed out that in the case of Hadith, there neither existed a similar level of exquisite literary style nor was the preservation of its text guaranteed by God. This had resulted in a wide scale fabrication of Hadith literature.<sup>89</sup> This theme was explored further by Maulwi 'Abdullah as he developed ingenious concepts regarding the historicity of the Quran and comprehensiveness of its text and teachings.

According to him, the Quran has been compiled—with all its verses and chapters put together in the present order as commanded by Allah... and not simply assorted randomly—in the form of a during the lifetime

of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He inferred this opinion on the basis of the 'fact' that the Quran, on various occasions in it has referred to itself as *al-Kitab* which, according to Arabic lexicographic works, was attributable only to a written document existing in a compiled form. This proved that the Prophet did not leave behind an incomplete book in a disarrayed form, rather he, during his lifetime, had 'noted down the whole book—from the first alphabet till the last dot—with his right hand and compiled it in book form.'<sup>90</sup> About the possibility of recording the revelations in an organized manner when they were being received piecemeal, Maulwi 'Abdullah maintained that the arrangement made in this regard was similar to that of the keeping of record books: blank pages were left out only to be filled later with the revelation of the missing portions of the text. With this approach regarding the compilation of the Quran, Maulwi 'Abdullah ruled out the possibility of an abrogation in the Quranic text.<sup>91</sup> His denunciation of the concept of abrogation, in line with that of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, was extended to include earlier scriptures as well. To the question as to why certain items or practices had been held permissible or forbidden for earlier people and not for the later ones, Maulwi 'Abdullah held the opinion that it had been done as a measure of punishment and not with the intention of modifying the Divine Will as such.<sup>92</sup> When it came to Quran, Maulwi 'Abdullah was elaborate in stating his interpretation of the term *naskh* or abrogation: He wrote:

According to Arabic lexicography and Quran, it is definitely proven that *naskh* also refers to 'alternative arrangement'.... In the whole of the Quran there are many commandments which have been complemented with their alternative commandments as well. Hence when due to situational demands and worldly compulsions, original commands cannot be implemented then their alternative commands are brought into enforcement. As conditions and situations changes, the alternative commands are again replaced with the original commands. For example when peace prevails Jihad is abrogated and if the path of Islam is obstructed or harmed then the full conditions of Jihad, as specified in Quran, become applicable and peacetime religious observances are abrogated. For example, it no longer matters if conditions and rituals of Namaz can be observed or not. Even [the requirements of] ablution and bath are abrogated along with various ritual postures to be performed during prayers. But when peace is established then all the conditions and rituals relating to Namaz are also restored. ... Hence, it can be concluded that some verses abrogate and others are abrogated. Even verses regarding Monotheism can also be abrogated temporarily. So what abrogation means is simply issuance of a religious command in place of the other on the condition that the first



command can, due to some temporary problem, no longer be abided by. Once that problem is no longer there, then the first command would regain its authority and validity as before.<sup>93</sup>

On the basis of such a formulation, Maulwi 'Abdullah denied a historical, as well as a theological, possibility of deletions from Quranic text or late dating of its compilation to drive home the point emphasizing the credibility and impeccable historicity of the Quran, lack of contradictions in its text and inimitability of its style. This belief in the comprehensiveness of the Quran along with reservations about the historicity of Hadith literature and aversion to succumb to the dictates of its contents—for reasons both 'historiographical' and theological—were the distinctive features of Maulwi 'Abdullah's Quran-only approach and the basis on which his version of Ahl al-Qur'an was founded.

#### 4.9. COMPREHENSIVENESS OF QURAN: TOWARDS A 'QURANI NAMAZ'

A summary dismissal by Maulwi 'Abdullah of the necessity of reliance on works of Hadith and the rest of Isnad paradigm for details of faith and practices was theologically guarded by a counter-belief in the adequacy of Quran to fill the ensuing information gaps about the religion of Islam. This approach was best demonstrated in one of his tracts where he observed that:

Muslims generally believe that Islam has five principles and basis: (1) Affirming the Unity of God and prophethood [of Muhammad (PBUH)]; (2) Prayer; (3) Charity; (4) Fasting; (5) Pilgrimage. Hanafis, Shaf'is, Malikis, Hanbalis, Ahl-i-Hadith and Shi'a etc. are all agreed on this. And all these sects believe in the Quran to be the word of God. But it is surprising that the same people also believe that except for the first article of faith the rest have only abstractly been touched upon in the Quran and that explanation and elaboration of these [principles] is to be found in books of Hadith and jurisprudence. Had there been no Hadith and jurisprudence, the Quran would have been useless and unreliable. It would have failed to give details about *namaz*, charity, fasting and pilgrimage. It is because the word of God does not explain [even] the number of *rak'at* in a prayer to be offered, especially the details of *rak'at* for the Friday and 'Id prayers are completely lacking. Similarly, the timings of Namaz and postures of various rituals to be observed during Namaz and their respective salutations have not been elaborated upon in the Quran... According to this belief, the four essentials of Islam on which hinge [the structure of] Islam and its life and without the observance of which no one can declare



himself as a Muslim and which are considerably relevant to the problems of religion—have not been mentioned in the Quran and [its text] is void of them. And whatever little details are to be found in the Quran are of no use and does not help in actual practices.<sup>96</sup>

This effectively summarizes Maulwi 'Abdullah's understanding of his opponents' beliefs about the Quran as the repository of general guiding principles and Hadith as a practical demonstration of the principles laid down, and an extensive application and interpretation of them. Maulwi 'Abdullah challenged such notions about the Quran and Hadith. His first line of argument was to cite verses which repeatedly referred to the Quran as 'a detailed explanation of everything' and 'an exposition of all things' in accordance with which all the decisions were to be made and practices adopted. Those responsible for failing to comply were to earn Allah's wrath and liable to be tagged as unbelievers.<sup>95</sup> According to Maulwi 'Abdullah, Muhammad (PBUH) himself was fully cognizant of these instructions and simply followed what was inspired to him without being able to effect change, modification or addition in the Divine content on his own accord.<sup>96</sup> For this reason, the Prophet had been reliant on Quranic teachings and practices continuous from the days of earlier prophets in details of Namaz and other religious practices ordained as compulsory for every Muslim. Maulwi 'Abdullah found fault with the traditional Muslim belief of depending on Hadith for details of Namaz. He 'exposed' the ambiguity of such a belief by raising the question about the mode of instruction, whereby, the Prophet was enlightened as to the form of Namaz. He argued that Allah either practically demonstrated the rituals and various prayer positions or simply transmitted the details verbally. While the first plausible explanation was ruled out by him as ridiculous, the latter one gave rise to his observation that the same oral communiqué could well have been incorporated in the Quran.<sup>97</sup> A conspicuous absence of such details combined under a single chapter of the Quran did not dwarf Maulwi 'Abdullah's ambitions to look for the details of Namaz in Quranic content.<sup>98</sup> He insisted upon this on the premise that for him the absence of any other divine source of knowledge or credible commanding authority, and a blind faith in Quran's proclamation of expositor of all things were proofs enough that all the required religious details had aptly been described in the Quran with great elucidation.

Hence, looking for details of Namaz was most relevant for Maulwi 'Abdullah's Quran-only project since it was most integral to Muslims' everyday religious activity, and required greater specialized information in

minute details than other Muslim practices. Also, nothing else could have served as a better second line of argument in his case for the comprehensiveness of the Quran than a practical demonstration of its adequacy in matters of details to the exclusion of Hadith and the authority of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). For this purpose Maulwi 'Abdullah devoted a voluminous book in which he took great pains to note all aspects of prayer including details about the number of daily prayers and *rak'at* (divisions within prayer); recommended salutations; and body postures to be maintained during the offering of prayers. A detailed enumeration of Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's Qurani Namaz is required in order to understand the principles of Quranic exegesis and semantic methodologies<sup>99</sup> adopted by him to derive Islamic principles of faith and practice from the Quran. These ranged from de-contextualizing verses or ignoring the preferred meanings of a particular word in a verse, to invoking complexities of Arabic grammar and rhetoric or interspersing translated passages with comments favourable to purported claims about the Quran.

From the beginning of his mission Maulwi 'Abdullah acknowledged—as he had done in his written polemic with Muhammad Husayn Batalawi—the limitations of his approach by conceding that the minute details of Namaz (for example the procedure for ablution or bath) did not reflect upon the actual offering of the prayers and, hence, they had been avoided in the Quran owing to their irrelevance. The technical details of offering prayers were thus left up to the sensibilities of the people. Not much elucidation was required than what had broadly been specified in the Quran (5:6) in consonance with the dictates of human instincts. Similarly, the conditions which made it mandatory for the worshipper to bathe prior to offering his prayers had been mentioned in the Quran (4: 43 and 2:222) without any further instructions about the procedure to be adopted to attain ritual state of purity through bathing.<sup>100</sup> Another matter of preliminary concern was the timings of the five daily prayers which, according to Maulwi 'Abdullah, had been specified in the Quranic verses 11:114 and 17:78. In the latter verse<sup>101</sup> the word *duluk*, i.e. declining of the sun from the meridian, specified the prayer timings for two prayers during the day and one before sunset. The word *ghasaq*, i.e. dark of night, is interpreted by Maulwi 'Abdullah as a referral to the 'Isha Namaz (night prayer). The morning prayers was mentioned by the Arabic word for morning, *Fajar*.

The first act of Qurānic Namaz, according to Maulwi 'Abdullah was *qayam*,<sup>102</sup> and was similar in nomenclature to that offered by other

Muslims. The worshipper was to stand in an upright position facing the direction of the Ka'ba while grasping both the ears like an accused and invoking Allah's greatness.<sup>103</sup> This served as a formal and appropriate commencement of a complete act of submission, i.e. Namaz, in which every human organism, by one action or the other, expressed its humility before the Lord. This was implied by such actions as folding of hands during *qayam* or rubbing the nose on the surface in *sajdah* (prostration). Similarly, ears were to be grasped as a sign of one's meekness. For a Quranic justification of this innovation that he had introduced in his prescribed form of Qurani Namaz, Maulwi 'Abdullah alluded to the following Quranic verses: 'Say: Have ye imagined, if Allah should take away your hearing and your sight and seal your hearts, Who is the Allah Who could restore it to you save Allah? See how We display the revelations unto them! Yet still they turn away' (Q 6:46). The explanation that Maulwi 'Abdullah provided for the above verses was as follows:

O Prophet, Say [to those people who do not humble their ears and hearts in prayer, that is, who do not grasp their ears, do not prevent their eyes from wandering, and who have no fear of God in their hearts]: Tell me, after thinking, if God grasps your ears [enlarges them] and your eyes [blots them out] and binds your hearts, then who do you have but God to return them to you? [Since there is no one, you had better grasp your ears in prayer, keep your eyes from wandering and maintain the fear of God in your hearts.]<sup>104</sup>

The next step in Qurani Namaz required the worshipper to fold his hands above the navel as a mark of respect and humility and recital of verses 6:79 of the Quran to impress upon oneself the need for spiritual-mental concentration in the offering of prayers.<sup>105</sup> In line with the normal Muslim practice, the worshipper had to recite the first chapter of the Quran, i.e. *Sura Fatiba*, in this posture. To support an evidence for this recitation from the Quran, Maulwi 'Abdullah made a fantastical interpretation of another Quranic verse. His 'translation' of Quranic 15:87, with notes added to it in parenthesis, read:

And verily We have given to you seven verses (of great *Fatiba*) which deserve to be recited repeatedly in the prayers and these verses are a great summary of the whole content of Quran. (Thus you should render what is due on you as thanks for this bounty [that is *Fatiba*] by offering it in each segment of every prayer and do not be disturbed by the slanders of the infidels).<sup>106</sup>

In the general mode of prayer observed by Muslims, *Fatiha* is followed by recitation of verses from any portion of the Quran. Unlike other scholars who cited a *hadith* or *sunnat* (saying or practice) of the Prophet to justify this sequence. And for all the other segments of the prayer, Maulwi 'Abdullah referred to Quranic verses 73:20<sup>107</sup> and construed its meaning as implying recitation of brief verses during *qayam* in order to shorten its duration. Such an understanding was based on the presumption that God could not have referred to recitation of Quranic verses twice in the same breath without there being any difference between the two. This difference, in Maulwi 'Abdullah's opinion, becomes evident if one appreciates the idea that first part half of this Quranic verse points to the recitation of *Fatiha* in *qayam*, while in the latter half, recitation from any portion of Quran after *Fatiha* has been commanded in prayers.<sup>108</sup> He continued to follow the pattern almost consensually observed by Muslims in their prayers as he cited verses 17:107–10<sup>109</sup> to describe *ruku'*, i.e. bowing down on knees, as the next phase of Qurani Namaz. Even though a number of verses mention *ruku'* to be observed during Namaz, none gives details about specificities of its ritualistic posturing. This was attributed by Maulwi 'Abdullah to the familiarity of Arabs with the 'concept' of *ruku'* because of which further details regarding its performance were uncalled for.<sup>110</sup> The same verses were used by Maulwi 'Abdullah for elaborating upon the performance of the two prostrations (*sujud*, sing: *sajdah*) in quick succession to each other which concluded the first *rak'at* (segment) of Namaz. The same was to be repeated for the second *rak'at* but with the difference that after the second prostration, the worshipper was to sit on his toes with knees touching the surface, thus suggesting a half-standing appearance called *qa'da* in accordance with verse 45:27, for recitation of verses; sending salutations to all the prophets and prayers for himself. The Qurani Namaz is then concluded.<sup>111</sup> Apart from recitation of *Sura Fatiha* followed by recitation from any portion of the Quran, salutations designated by Maulwi 'Abdullah for specific prayer positions of Qurani Namaz were short recitals from the Quran reflecting general expressions of submission and meekness to the Will of Allah and hymns praising His Benevolence and Beneficence. Besides salutations, the difference in Qur'ani and conventional Namaz was the fact that there is no *Azan* (call to prayer)<sup>112</sup> in Qurani Namaz. Furthermore, the *Imam* (prayer leader) does not stand ahead of other worshippers during congregational prayers.

To settle the tricky question of the number of *rak'at* to be offered in the five daily prayers, Maulwi 'Abdullah referred to Quranic verse

4:101–02 which deals with the observance of ritual prayers during war times. Under such circumstances the Quran prescribed that the fighting army be divided into two, with one offering a single *rak'at* behind the *Imam* and then moving to the rear to make room for the other group to offer a *rakat*. In this way the *Imam* alone were to offer two *rak'ats* in total. That there did not exist any difference between the prayer leader and those who prayed behind him was used by Maulwi 'Abdullah to deduce that two was the number of *rak'ats* to be offered in prayers during the period of combat. To this number he applied the '*Qur'ani Usul*' (Quranic principle) of 'relaxation' whereby an actual commandment or obligation was reduced to half of its original intent in times of emergencies. Hence, the actual, and maximum number of *rak'at* for a 'normal' *Namaz* was to be double its 'emergency-specific' number of two.<sup>113</sup> On the basis of this logic, the number of *rak'ats* were arbitrarily reserved for different prayers of the day by Maulwi 'Abdullah. The number of *rak'ats* was to be in accordance with the relative ease or urgency of the situation. This 'ease' or 'urgency' was dependent on the time of the day reserved for the observance of that particular *Namaz*. According to Maulwi 'Abdullah, it was easier to offer the two prayers during the middle of the day and the one late at night than that in early morning or at sunset. In accordance with this formula, it followed that full set of four *rak'at* was to be observed in the three prayers during the 'convenient' hours of the day while for the remaining two prayers half of that number sufficed.<sup>114</sup>

A similar approach was adopted by Maulwi 'Abdullah while deducing Quranic injunctions regarding *Zakat*. In a separate tract on '*Qur'ani Zakat*', he distinguished between two types of self-earned wealth. Of the first type that was earned with relative ease, one-fifth was to be paid as charity. But the second type for which one toiled hard and sweat his blood, only one-tenth of it was to be paid as charity.<sup>115</sup> This was also in accordance with Maulwi 'Abdullah's interpretation of the Quran and understanding of the Quranic principle of leniency with regard to some measure.

When Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's book on *Qurani Namaz* was published after its completion in July 1905, it elicited a host of adverse reactions. The negative responses were hardly surprising considering that Maulwi 'Abdullah had introduced several modifications in the established form of Muslim *Namaz* without premising them on authentic sources of religious guidance like *Hadith* and *Fiqh*. Even in using the Quran to support his version of *Namaz*, Maulwi 'Abdullah had unabashedly resorted to stretching the meaning and intent of Quranic verses to extremities so



as to demonstrate a desired inference. He, too, was not oblivious of the possibility of a backlash to his non-conformist ideas. He pre-empted some of the critical remarks regarding changes in Namaz by observing that those involved in criticizing Qurani Namaz were following in the footsteps of the opponents of Prophet Shu'ayb who refused to offer the prayer prescribed by the Prophet for they did not want to forsake the ways of their ancestors.<sup>116</sup> An incisive criticism was made by Sana'ullah Amritsari as he questioned the authority on the basis of which Maulwi 'Abdullah had made the selection and the ritualistic order of Qur'anic verses for recital during Namaz. He argued that if, in doing so, Maulwi 'Abdullah had relied on his personal judgements then the same right must be extended to everyone.<sup>117</sup> Or, alternatively, one should accept the prevalent form of Namaz as instructed by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) following Divine rubrics. But Maulwi 'Abdullah obstinately adhered to his version of Qur'anic Namaz which was theologically expounded in his works, and practically established by him in the Siriyan Wala mosque in Lahore.

Even those sympathetic to his cause tried to convince him of the futility of his effort but even people like Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari were not able to convince him to keep the existing form of Namaz intact.<sup>118</sup> Such an attitude of fierce commitment of Maulwi 'Abdullah to the basics of his newly founded sect despite all its failings, has also been reported by Aslam Jayrajpurī who met him in Lahore in 1904. At that time Aslam Jayrajpurī himself was unsure about the relevance and authenticity of Hadith literature and even though held a long discussion over this issue with Maulwi 'Abdullah, but he was unimpressed with his arguments and inflexible approach.<sup>119</sup> Even Maulwi 'Abdullah's direct descendants were unimpressed by the ideas of their father. His son Ibrahim Chakralawi (d. 1919), trained as a Ahl-i-Hadith scholar, was disinherited by Maulwi 'Abdullah for refusing to 'convert' to Ahl al-Qur'an.<sup>120</sup> Maulwi 'Abdullah's grandson Maulwi Isma'il (d. 1944) also remained a committed Ahl-i-Hadith member throughout his life and was actively engaged in Ahl-i-Hadith organizations and madrasas in South Punjab.<sup>121</sup> Hence, with little success in his proselytizing efforts to add converts to his Ahl al-Qur'an movement, Maulwi 'Abdullah left Lahore for his hometown Chakralah before his death in 1916.<sup>122</sup>

Although Maulwi 'Abdullah's writings had an influence on the larger discourse of reformist Islam, yet he failed to attract a large following. Without any disregard for the discursive impact and outreach of his written works and using census figures alone for substantiation, it can be inferred that the number of those who self-consciously identified



themselves as Ahl al-Qur'an never crossed beyond the limit of a few hundred during the lifetime of Maulwi 'Abdullah or after his death. In a census, his disciple Shaykh Chittu had appealed to members of Anjuman Ahl al-Qur'an not to register themselves as Sunni or Ahl-i-Hadith but as Ahl al-Qur'an. This appeal did not elicit the desired outcome as only 271 members of Ahl al-Qur'an were entered in the census for the year 1911 from Punjab. Their strength, in individual districts of Punjab, was reported as follows.<sup>123</sup>

District	Persons
Ludhiana	7
Lahore	62
Sialkot	20
Gujranwala	32
Gujrat	60
Jehlum	6
Mianwali <sup>124</sup>	7
Lyallpur	12
Jhang	1
Multan	50
Patiala State	14

Even with such a limited support base, organizational strength and sources, the Ahl al-Qur'an group founded by Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi managed to prolong its existence for a few more years—at least till 1932. After his death, the organization was guided by Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali Khan Lahauri. — دہلوی

#### 4.10. AHL AL-QUR'AN MOVEMENTS AFTER MAULWI 'ABDULLAH CHAKRALAWI

After the death of Maulwi 'Abdullah, the so-called organization of Ahl al-Qur'an followers established by him briefly lapsed into inactivity. Their activities, however, resumed with the arrival of Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali Khan Lahauri (c. 1854–?) from Delhi who established himself as the new *Imam* (prayer-leader) at the Siriyan Wala mosque and stepped into the shoes of Maulwi 'Abdullah as the chief ideologue of the Ahl al-Qur'an group of Lahore. The publication of *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* was resumed after a gap of almost five years.

The origins of Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali Khan Lahauri—nicknamed the 'three-day Maulwi' by Sana'ullah Amritsari on account of former's belief that only three fasts are required to be observed during the month of Ramazan—were even more obscure than that of his predecessor. The only available information about him suggests that he was born in Gurdaspur in East Punjab and resided in Delhi for a long time where he came under the influence of Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's religious concepts through 'Abdullah Khan—deputy superintendent of Intelligence in Delhi.<sup>125</sup>

Despite the demise of Ahl al-Qur'an Lahore's chief ideologue and the limited resources at the disposal of the organization, Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali Khan Lahauri did well in contributing his share to lively, yet, controversial polemics regarding the Prophet and Hadith.<sup>126</sup> He shared Maulwi 'Abdullah's estimation of a negative impact of the teachings of Hadith on impressionable 'graduate' Muslims seeking a rational explanation of religion. What strengthened his resolve against Hadith were occasional incidents of Muslim conversion to other religions. One such incident took place when a Muslim named Sayyid 'Abdul Rahman, hailing from a noble, religious family, converted to Hinduism and 'became' Gayan Indar. He ascribed his change of religion to certain traditions dealing with the Creator and His creation of the world.<sup>127</sup> Such traditions about God which described Him as sitting on a Throne—and hence implying a spatial restriction of the Omnipresent—and His Prophet's personal and marital life were highlighted in *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* in a series of articles penned by Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali. He contrasted the content of such Ahadith with that of the Quran with the purpose of underlining the incongruity between the two. About the historicity of Hadith, he, like Maulwi 'Abdullah, did not undertake a detailed critical enumeration and only made general observations laced with commonly known 'facts' about the origins of Hadith literature which were compiled much later after the Prophet's death. Maulana Muhammad 'Ali (d. 1951), leader of the breakaway 'Lahauri *jama'at*' of the Ahmadiyya sect, contested such oft-repeated arguments against Hadith and rebutted them in a comprehensive work on Hadith studies.<sup>128</sup> Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali's lack of specialized knowledge about Hadith sciences was reflected in his inability to convincingly respond to Muhammad 'Ali's arguments other than by suggesting that the recently discovered letters and manuscripts—cited as evidences in support of written Ahadith from the days of Prophet—were all forged to deceive the Muslims.<sup>129</sup>

Apart from the usual rebuttals and counter-polemics by rival Muslim groups, Ahl al-Qur'an of Lahore under Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali was faced

with opposition from 'new entrants' into the fray: Shi'a scholars,<sup>130</sup> and rival Ahl al-Qur'an groups. It was hardly surprising that Ahl al-Qur'an's projection of Caliph 'Umar's dictum *hasbuna kitab Allah* (the Book of God is enough) and their criticism of collections of Hadith respected by the majority of Sunni Muslims were referred to by some Shi'a scholars in polemics with their Sunni counterparts to levy the charge that these traditions were maligning the name of Islam.<sup>131</sup> What concerned Ahl al-Qur'an more was the use of epithet 'Chakralawi'—with which followers of Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi were satirized by their opponents—for 'Umar. It was because 'Umar, by raising the slogan of sufficiency of the Quran, had, according to some Shi'a scholars, become the first person to lay down the principles which were later elaborated by Maulwi 'Abdullah. In this sense, 'Umar was the first of all the Chakralawis.<sup>132</sup> Even though Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali had repeatedly referred to 'Umar and his statement as a potent argument in favour of his own creed, he could not afford to be acquiescing to Shi'a labelling of him as a Chakralawi—a term loaded with negative connotations. According to Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali, 'Umar's statement was not a 'strike from German canon' that demolished 'Ali's divine claims of caliphate and stunned the other Companions who were present into silence. He could not have prevented settling of the issue of the caliphate in 'Ali's favour as prophets were not constrained by any pressures in truthfully conveying the message of God.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, it could be said that, 'Umar made this statement to affirm and proclaim his true faith and did not intend to use it as an argument for alleged usurpation of power from Ali as believed by Shi'ites. The tag of 'Chakralawi' for 'Umar—intended as a slur—was, hence, not justified.

During 1920s other Ahl al-Qur'an groups appeared on the scene whose ideas were not exactly the same as those espoused by Maulwi 'Abdullah. Many of these groups were rather short-lived and revolved around a central figure. They did not make significant contributions to the subject of Hadith and the Prophet. Mistri Muhammad Ramazan (1875–1940) and his Ahl al-Qur'an 'organization' based in Gujranwala, was one such example.<sup>134</sup> During 1923–26 the group published a monthly journal titled *Balagh-ul-Qur'an*. Mistri Ramazan was a disciple of Maulwi 'Abdullah and in many of his writings he borrowed directly from latter's works—especially when interpreting the terms like *Rusul* (Messenger), *Kitab* (Book) and *Hikmat* (Wisdom).<sup>135</sup> His main disagreement with Maulwi 'Abdullah was, however, with regard to some details of Qurani Namaz. Mistri Ramazan was not the only Ahl al-Qur'an to differ from his mentor in this respect. During the last days of Maulwi 'Abdullah a former Ahl-i-

Hadith scholar from Wazirabad Hafiz Inayat Ullah had come up with the view that only three prayers were established by the Quran.<sup>136</sup> According to Sayyid Rafi-ud-Din Multani—another ‘independent’ Ahl al-Qur’an<sup>137</sup>—the number of daily prayers was neither five nor three but in between the two figures.<sup>138</sup> Miyan Muhammad Fazil of *Ahl al-Zikr wa’l-Qur’an*, Chakwal (Jhelum District), in 1939, in a tract titled *Salat-ul-Mursalin* elaborated upon his own version of Quranic Namaz. Among other concerns that he raised about the traditional concept of Namaz, he also pointed out the ‘problems’ inherent in the recitation of Quranic verses during Namaz. According to him, most worshippers with no understanding of Quran’s Arabic text recite verses—like the ones dealing with issues of dowry, divorce etc—that have no relevance with the intent and purpose of Namaz. He, therefore, recommended specifying the chapters or verses for recitation during Namaz.<sup>139</sup> For Muhammad-ud-Din Gujrati—a contributor to Amritsar-based Ahl al-Qur’an journal *Balagh*—Namaz was simply a way of remembrance of God through the recitation of the Quran so as to promote an understanding of its text among the believers.<sup>140</sup> According to Mistri Muhammad Ramazan, the number of prayers prescribed by the Quran were three. He argued that the Quran had specifically mentioned the names of morning and night prayers as *Fajar* and *‘Isha* respectively, while for the mid-day prayer the word *duluk* had been used in the same verse.<sup>141</sup> The other two prayers, and their names, he opined, had been derived from compilation of Hadith by Imams Bukhari and Muslim.<sup>142</sup> In his version of Qurani Namaz, Mistri Ramazan recommended only two *rak’ats* in a prayer and, like Rafi-ud-Din Multani, disallowed the practice of grasping of ears during *qayam* (standing position in prayers).

These changes made by Mistri Muhammad Ramazan were challenged by Maulwi Hashmat ‘Ali on the grounds that the former was a disciple of Maulwi ‘Abdullah Chakralawi and therefore believed in all his religious findings. For a resolution of these differences, both were invited for discussion by Rafi-ud-Din Multani to Dera Ismail Khan in November 1920 but to no avail.<sup>143</sup> The clash between the two was more personal than ideological. Maulwi Hashmat ‘Ali Khan Lahauri strove to establish the supremacy of Ahl al-Qur’an Lahore branch over and above all other Ahl al-Qur’an groups operating (on a very limited scale) in different cities of Punjab including Gujrat, Gujranwala, Jhelum, Multan, Sialkot, and Dera Ismail Khan in the North-West Frontier. This was because, in his opinion, the Lahore branch was the parent organization whose founder and followers had overcome great dangers in establishing it against all

odds. He expressed similar views during an annual meeting of Ahl al-Qur'an followers convened from all over Punjab by Mistri Muhammad Ramazan.<sup>144</sup> In his response, as expressed in several writings, Mistri Ramazan refused to acknowledge the 'hegemony' of the Lahore chapter of the Ahl al-Qur'an or to become its subsidiary organization or an associated branch. Instead he attempted to project Ahl al-Qur'an, Gujranwala, as the real flag-bearer of true Islam and accused the rest of colluding with Ahl-i-Hadith in dissemination of tradition-based Islam.<sup>145</sup>

While Mistri Muhammad Ramazan's challenge phased out gradually, Ahl al-Qur'an, Lahore, had to continuously face a much serious issue of a prolonged legal battle for the possession of its mosque in Siriyan Wala Bazar. The mosque that had been in use for observance of Quranic Namaz by Ahl al-Qur'an Lahore had become a centre of controversy even during the lifetime of Maulwi 'Abdullah. In 1903, Shaykh Chittu had purchased a house worth Rs 25,000 and executed a *waqfnama* (deed of endowment) in favour of Ahl al-Qur'an and himself became the custodian of that property. In that document it was stated that the *waqf* was to be acted upon after Shaykh Chittu's death. Since other members too had contributed funds for this purchase, they were incensed at Chittu's attempt to appropriate the property for himself.<sup>146</sup> Resultantly, he was expelled from custodianship and forced to submit a revised and more complete *waqfnama* in 1905 by which custodianship was handed over to other persons. Since the original *waqfnama* included a directive that a mosque should be erected to carry out the object of the *waqf*, the newly appointed custodians tried to procure a site for the building of one, but their efforts were thwarted by other Muslim mainstream groups who were not in favour of the establishment of an Ahl al-Qur'an mosque. It was then that it was decided by them to seek help from Shaykh Chittu who had considerable wealth and influence. But as Chittu acquired the possession of *waqf* property, he again began to consider it his personal asset by attempting to assert right of ownership. He even gifted a part of the house to his wife in 1909. For these acts, Chittu was removed from custodianship, and although, he accepted his dismissal in written statement in June 1909 but he continued in his efforts for wresting possession of the property through legal means.<sup>147</sup> A suit was filed by him and was followed up by his heirs but it was turned down by lower courts before its final dismissal by the High Court in 1920.

In their petition, Chittu's legal heirs had taken the plea that the execution of the *waqf* had been contingent on the construction of a mosque, which had not occurred. The Court dismissed the plea on the



ground that the property had been treated like a *waqf* from the very beginning and could validly be described as a mosque used by Ahl al-Qur'an for the offering of prayers and recitation of the Quran. The property met the criteria specified in Islamic Fiqh. The court ruled that a site reserved for prayers is to be considered as a mosque even if the conventional design designated for mosques such as minarets etc. are absent from its design structure.<sup>148</sup> However, the court did not allow the mosque to be used exclusively by the Ahl al-Qur'an—as was specified in the original *waqf*—as such a provision had already been outlawed by superior courts while deciding on whether Hanafis and Ahl-i-Hadith could be restricted from offering prayers in each others' mosques. Some of Ahl al-Qur'an's opponents led by Zafar Ali Khan—editor of the influential Urdu daily *Zamindar*—made use of this provision to enter the mosque by force and disrupt prayers. An effort was also made to establish the Hanafi mode of worship. The matter was referred to a lower court, which delivered its verdict in September 1925 whereby Ahl al-Qur'an were allowed to retain the control of the mosque while allowing all other Muslims to use the mosque and offer prayers in their own way. Those accused of 'vandalism' were asked to submit security bonds.<sup>149</sup>

With the control of the mosque finally secured, another turbulent phase in the brief history of Ahl al-Qur'an Lahore followed. In an apparent bid to avoid any further attempt to seize control of the Siriyan Wala Bazar mosque, Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali tried to force custodians and other members organizing the affairs of Ahl al-Qur'an Lahore to sign an affidavit pledging support to him. This was opposed by the concerned members as an attempt at foisting one man's authority over the rest. An internal power struggle ensued. Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali's opponents wanted to constrain his role in the running of the mosque and handling of the organization's funds. In order to reach a compromise, it was suggested that Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali be refrained from giving the *Azan* (call to prayers); making personal attacks against his opponents in sermons; and receiving donations for the mosque. His editorial powers were also to be clipped by ensuring the approval of the organizing committee to be binding for the publication of any article in *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an*.<sup>150</sup> In forefront of opposition were Qari Ahmad-ud-Din and Haji 'Umar ud-Din<sup>151</sup> who were accused by Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali of refusing to submit to third party mediators—especially by Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's grandson Qazi Yahya—decisions in his favour.<sup>152</sup> Despite his best efforts, Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali failed to muster enough support to prevent his ignominious expulsion from the mosque in 1932 amid charges of corruption and even



abduction of a woman.<sup>153</sup> Haji 'Umar-ud-Din and Qari Ahmad-ud-Din assumed charge as the secretary and president of the organization respectively. But with Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali's *excommunication*, Ahl al-Qur'an Lahore's even marginal existence soon came to end and it silently slipped into oblivion without a trace.

#### 4.11. CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the figure of Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal and underscored the significance of his act of 'apostasy' in the context of colonial Punjab's religious polemics and controversies. It also noted the importance of Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's denouncing the authority of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Hadith altogether and calling upon Muslims to follow only the Quran in the derivation of their religious beliefs and practices. The precedence set by Maulwi 'Abdullah inspired similar movements, although, at a much smaller scale in other parts of Punjab as well has been highlighted. However, the idea of exclusive reliance on the Quran at the expense of complete neglect of other sources—resulting in such efforts such as reinterpreting the ritual worship of Namaz in the form of Qurani Namaz—impressed upon the minds of other scholars with similar inclinations the untenable nature of such extreme views. The later movements and their ideologues, therefore, resorted to looking for a middle ground between the authority of the Quranic and non-Quranic sources and plugging the information gap ensuing from reliance on one source exclusively for guidance, especially in matters relating to rituals and practices. In the next two chapters, a detailed study of alternative Ahl al-Qur'an models has been presented. They assist in displaying how the later Ahl al-Qur'an attempted to strike a balance between the need for upholding the supremacy of the Quran while accommodating the role of the Prophet—but not that of the whole Isnad paradigm—in order to impress upon Muslims the validity of their religious doctrines.

#### NOTES

1. Kenneth W. Jones has described the census as providing 'a new conceptualization of religion as a community, an aggregate of individuals united by a formal definition and given characteristics based on qualified data. Religions became communities mapped, counted, and above all compared with other religious communities.' Kenneth W. Jones, 'Religious Identity and the Indian Census' in Gerald Barrier, ed. *Census in British India: New Perspectives* (New Delhi, 1981), 84.

2. Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997).
3. Guha's critiques such an overarching, all-pervasive conceptualization of colonial power structure as an elitist, neo-colonialist 'Cambridge School' of historiography since it reduces history to the study of native responses to Imperialist stimuli. It endows the imperial government alone with the initiative that defines the structure and movement of politics while the colonized are denied having any will of their own. They are simply described as slotting into a framework made for them by their rulers by replicating their institutional patterns to benefit, as clients, from their patrons in the form of jobs, titles, agricultural land and canal water. *Ibid.*, 85. Even though Guha is rightly critical of the underlying assumptions of such an approach to history, its usefulness, nevertheless, in the understanding of colonial set up as envisioned by its framers and its reception by the traditional landed aristocracy, newly emerging elite groups, members of services sector and those from trading classes co-opted into a symbiotic relationship with the empire—cannot be set aside. In other words, the purpose is to outline the conceptual framework of British Colonialism's *paternalism* in Punjab without denying agency or initiative to various sections of the Punjabi population. Events, figures, political and religious groups—whether bourgeoisie or subaltern—resisting British colonialism and operating beyond the immediacy of patron-client relationship on their own initiative, are too numerous, mass-based and influential in disrupting the homogenizing tendencies of this narrative that they cannot be subdued, silenced, ignored or overlooked. Studies concerned with the dynamics of identity formation in colonial Punjab, while giving primacy to the role played by colonialism and its apparatuses, have nevertheless located these processes in pre-Colonial history and have invested the agency in the communities themselves as makers of their own identity. Two important studies in this regard are: Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi, 1994); Nonica Datta, *Forming an Identity: A Social History of the Jats* (New Delhi, 1999).
4. For further elaboration of the concept of 'fuzzy' communities, cf. Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Imaginary Institution of India', in Chatterjee, Partha and Gyanendra Pandey, eds. *Subaltern Studies VII. Writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi, 1993), 20–6. Kaviraj does not deny the existence of communities based on an idea of identity in pre-modern social forms. On the contrary, he argues that the sense of community feeling was usually more intense than those of modern societies. Yet he justifies the description of these communities as 'fuzzy' because they had vague boundaries and, unlike modern communities, were not enumerated. The enumeration of fuzzy communities, by census and other means along with the imperative of 'nation-formation', transformed these identities into choate, focused and organized entities during the colonial period. Scholars like Sumit Sarkar, Gyanendra Pandey and Sandria Freitag, arguing from their respective positions, have offered similar explanations for the process of identity formation during the colonial period. C.A. Bayly, on the other hand, has traced the historical formation of religious identities from the pre-colonial period. Cited in Datta, *Social History of the Jats* (New Delhi, 1999), 3.
5. Jeffery Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India* (Stanford, 2002), 56. Overall in Punjab the number of printing press increased by over 70% between 1864 and 1883 with a fivefold cumulative increase in the number of books published between 1875 and 1880. Ian Talbot, *India and Pakistan* (London, 2000), 60.

6. Om Parkash Kaushal, *The Radha Soami Movement: 1891–1997* (Jalandhar, 1998), 12. The *zenana* or female wing of the Christian missions made available similar opportunities for western learning to the women of Punjab by opening a number of schools.
7. The Church Mission Society first reported the spread of *Chuhra* conversion movement into the area they 'occupied' in 1884–85. From their main centre of activity in Sialkot, it reached south to Narowal and from Gurdaspur south into the Batala Tehsil. Cf. John C. B. Webster, 'Christian Conversion in Punjab: What has Changed?' in Rowena Robinson and Sathianathan Clarke, eds. *Religious Conversion in India: Modes, Motivations, and Meanings* (New Delhi, 2003), 363.
8. Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: The Hindu Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century Punjab* (New Delhi, 1989), 10.
9. What facilitated such an approach was the publication of an 'authentic' edition of Vedas edited by Max Müller and later by other of his colleagues in Germany as part of modernity's project to textually represent the 'East' in correct texts and exact translations, and a matching desire on the part of Hindu scholars to have scripturally authoritative texts like Islam and Christianity. As Peter van der Veer notes: 'If "history" and "nation" are only possible in the presence of the written printed word, then it is quite understandable that the orality of Hindu traditions was a "national" embarrassment for Indian scholars who were confronted with the comparison with the West.' Peter Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton, 2001), 119–20.
10. Jones, *Arya Dharm*, 33.
11. *Ibid.*, 27.
12. Uma Chakaravati, 'Whatever happened to the Vedic *Dasi*? Orientalism, Nationalism and a Script for the Past' in Zoya Hasan, ed. *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State* (New Delhi, 1994), 34.
13. Geoffrey A. Oddie, 'Constructing "Hinduism": the Impact of Protestant Missionary Movement on Hindu Self-Understanding' in Robert Eric Frykenberg, ed. *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communication since 1500* (London, 2003), 176. A similar approach was adopted by Pandit Shiv Narayan Agnihotri when he founded Dev Samaj in 1887. But soon he deviated from these doctrines to introduce a dual worship of himself and God in 1892. Three years later the worship of God was dispensed with. Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (New Delhi, repr. 2003), 105.
14. This technique was carried forward by his disciples, most notably Swami Sharaddhanand (d. 1926). In his book 'Puranon ki Napak Ta'lim se Bacho' (Save Yourself From the Un-Teachings of Puranas), Sharaddhanand deals with the issue of true sources of Hinduism by questioning the validity of Puranas. In his method of *quellenkritik* Sharaddhanand discredits a particular Purana—for example Bhavishya—with the historical proof for its very recent composition. He argues that far from being the work of the ancient Rishi Vyasa, it was written in the middle of the seventeenth century as shown by its material which he found to be offensive to reason and morality. For more details about the life and works of Swami Sharaddhanand, cf. J.T.F. Jordens, *Swami Sharaddhananda, his Life and Causes* (New Delhi, 1981), 61.
15. Other than publishing journals and newspapers, and translating Sanskrit text into vernaculars, Arya Samajis also developed a system of paid missionaries called Updeshaks. Kenneth W. Jones, 'The Arya Samaj in British India, 1857–1947' in Robert D. Baird, ed. *Religion in Modern India*, 33.

16. J.T.F. Jorden, 'Reconversion to Hinduism: the Shuddhi of the Arya Samaj', in G.A. Oddie ed. *Religion in South Asia: Religious Conversion and Revival Movements in South Asia in Medieval and Modern Times* (New Delhi, 1991), 216.
17. There were attempts to target not just individuals but groups of Muslims to bring about mass conversions—especially among 'Neo-Muslims'. The first actual attempt of mass Shuddhi of Muslim converts is said to have been made at Deeg in the Bharatpur state in eastern Rajputana. Yoginder Sikand, 'Arya Shuddhi and Muslim Tabligh: Muslim Reactions to Arya Samaj Proselytization (1923–30)' in Rowena Robinson and Sathianathan Clarke, eds. *Religious Conversion*, 101–02.
18. Jones, 'The Arya Samaj in British India', 35.
19. For these reasons, Harjot Oberoi, in his study of Sikh identity formation, does not 'single out the colonial state as an instrument for stamping Sikhism with a new consciousness and altered symbolic universe'. But he does admit that the Sikh identity was gradually crystallized into an impermeable one during the colonial period only. Oberoi, *Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 371–2.
20. Norman Gerald Barrier, 'The Singh Sabhas and the Evolution of Modern Sikhism, 1875–1925' in Robert D. Baird, ed. *Religion in Modern India*, 204. One of the classic expositions of distinct Sikh identity was Bha'i Kahn Singh's best-known works titled '*Hum Hindu Nahin Hayn*' (We are not Hindus). A conscious effort was made by Singh Sabha movements to dissociate themselves from Muslims—with whom they shared a monotheistic concept of God and much of Punjab's Sufi poetry—by supporting such acts as purposefully slaughtering the animals in a way different to that of the Muslims.
21. Norman G. Barrier, *The Sikhs and their Literature: A Guide to Tracts, Books and Periodicals, 1849–1919* (Delhi, 1970), xxi.
22. Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in Islam since 1850* (London, 2000), 41.
23. For details about these organizations and associations, cf. Ahmad Sa'id, *Musatmanan-i-Panjab ki Samaji aur Falahi Anjumanayn: Ek Tajziyati Mutal'a* (Lahore, 2004).
24. Of 70,000 to 80,000 books and pamphlets published in Punjab between 1867 and 1914; 25,000 to 30,000 were written by Muslims or published by them to meet the needs of the community in defending or proselytizing its religion. Edward Churchill, 'Printed Literature of the Punjabi Muslims, 1860–1900' in W. Eric Gustafson and Kenneth W. Jones, eds. *Sources on Punjab History* (New Delhi, 1975), 257. These also included books with intra-religious debates among the Muslims—especially between Ahl-i-Hadith and Hanafis.
25. Maulana 'Ubayd Ullah Sindhi (d. 1945) a noted Deobandi cleric is reported to have accepted Islam after reading this tract. He was born as a Sikh.
26. Lekh Ram, *Kulliyat-i-Arya Musafir* (Lahore, 1897), 626. For details, Cf. Gustafson and Jones, eds. *Punjab History*.
27. Swami Dayanand, *Satyarth Parkash*, trans. Vandematharam Ramachandra Rao as *Spot-Light on Truth: Swami Dayanand's Satyarth Parkash in English with Comments* (Hyderabad, 1988), 78.
28. Though written much after Swami Dayanand's death, Sana'ullah Amritsari's *Hagg Parkash bajawab Satyarth Parkash* (Lahore, repr. 2001) published in 1900 can be cited as one of the most important anti-Arya Samaji work that continued to be relevant in the Hindu-Muslim debates, especially during the Shuddhi movement of 1920s.
29. Lekh Ram, *Kulliyat*, 636.

30. This description of Islam by Lekh Ram is to be found in his most controversial tract published in 1892 titled *Ritala-i-Jihad ya'ni Din-i-Muhammadi ki Bunyad* (Lahore, 1892). Even missionary newspaper *Nur Afshan* commented disfavouably about it due to the apprehension that it could further heighten the feelings of hostility between the members of the two communities. Spencer Lavan, *The Ahmadiyah Movement: A History and Perspective* (New Delhi, 1974), 76. This prediction of worsening of communal harmony and the 'prophecy' made by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad about Lekh Ram's disgraceful death was materialized when Lekh Ram was assassinated by some unknown assailant in 1897.
31. Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal, *Dastan-i-Gham* (Lahore, 1954), II, 85.
32. Dev Samaj was started by a former Brahmo Samaj activist of Punjab, Pandit Shiv Nara'in Agnihotri, who described his religious doctrines as 'in Harmony with Facts and Laws of Nature and based on the Evolution or Dissolution of Man's Life-Power.' Dev Samaj 'combined positivist ideas of the evolution of society and knowledge in stages with a deep veneration and worship of Pandit Agnihotri.' Gyan Parkash, 'Science Between the Lines' in Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty, eds. *Subaltern Studies IX* (New Delhi, 1996), 73.
33. Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti, 'Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal' in *Al-A'itasm* (Lahore) 55, 23 (June 2003): 28-9.
34. Such accusations were made against him by Dev Ratna in a tract titled *Dev Samaj ka Abdul Ghafur aur Arya Samaj ka Dharampal* and Lala Lachman Das's *Dharampal ki Khudkushi*. Cited in Qasim 'Ali Ahmadi, *Shuddhi ki Ashuddhi* (Delhi, 1909), 4 and 64.
35. Bhatti, *al-A'itasm* 55, 25 (June 2003): 14. With communal tension running high, a precautionary measure was taken by the Arya Samajis to send Ghazi Mehmud to a secure Vedic Ashram to avoid any unpleasant incident. Dharampal, *Dastan-i-Gham*, II, 165.
36. Dharampal, *Tark-i-Islam* (Gujranwala, 1903).
37. Sana'ullah Amritsari, *Tark-i-Islam*, (Amritsar, repr. 1918), 6.
38. As noted earlier, Sana'ullah Amritsari had responded to Svami Dayannad's work as well and had alluded to various Hindu scriptures in his response. Ghazi Mehmud too, in his late writings, acknowledged that he found it impossible to counter the arguments put forward by Sana'ullah Amritsari.
39. An interesting example of that is found in the discussion of term *makar* which has been understood by Ghazi Mehmud as implying that God is deceitful in His dealings with the enemies. According to Sana'ullah Amritsari, it is improper to equate the term *makar* with deceit. The meanings described by him are that of a politician or statesman like Gladstone and Bismarck were. Amritsari, *Tark-i-Islam*, 18.
40. A good example of that can be seen in Sana'ullah Amritsari's treatment of the issue of Jihad. According to Sana'ullah, Quran sanctions Jihad only in peculiar set of conditions. The Vedas on the other hand allow a free license to kill one's enemy. Hence, Quranic concept of war is more humane and reasonable. Ibid., 156-7.
41. This appeal was titled as *Gayan Parkash* and published in April 1914. Cf. *Al-Muslim*, 1915, 544-45.
42. Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti, *Qazi Muhammad Sulayman Mansurpuri*, (Lahore, 2007), 201-24. His new Muslim name was proposed as Ghazi Mehmud and he was allowed to retain Dharampal as part of his name since its meaning did not suggest any Hindu-specific connotation.
43. Cited in *Ahl-i-Hadith* (Amritsar), 1 October 1915, 2.
44. Cited in *Ahl-i-Hadith*, 13 February 1925, 1-2.



45. *Hujjat-ul-Islam* (Lahore, n.d.) by Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi was one of the many books written against Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal. Some of the works written in response to Dharampal and his works were: Hakim Nur-ud-Din, *Nur ud-Din bajawab Tark-i-Islam* (Amritsar, n.d.); Qasim 'Ali Ahmadi, *Sa'iq-i-Zuljalal bar Nakhal-i-Dharampal* (Delhi, 1909); Maulwi Nabi Bakhsh, *Tark-i-Islam ha tardid Tark-i-Islam* (Wazirabad, ca. 1903); Maulwi Muhammad Huzurul Hasnain, *Risala Takzib-i-Ved va Tasdiq-i-Qur'an bajawab Tark-i-Islam Dharampal* (Muradabad, ca. 1904); Sana'ullah Amritsari, *Risala Taghib-ul-Islam bar Tehzib-ul-Islam* (Amritsar, 1905).
46. This was stated in the description of the 'Ahl-i-Koran' sect in the census report of Punjab for the year 1911. cf. *Census of India 1911, Vol. XIV, Punjab Part I* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1912), 170.
47. Dr 'Abdul Ra'uf Zafar, *'Ulum-ul-Hadith: Fanni, Fikri aur Tarikhi Mutal'a* (Lahore, 2006), 814-5. It is part of Ahl-i-Hadith's general principles of faith to avoid names that might suggest subservience to any being other than Allah. Cf. Muhammad b. Ibrahim Juna Garhi, *Siraj-i-Muhammadi al-ma'ruf Tarikh-i Ahl-i-Hadith* (Rawalpindi, repr., n.d.), 20.
48. Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's letter to Maulwi Allah Yar Khan, 24 *Rajab* 1303 AH (29 April 1886).
49. Cited in *Ahl-i-Hadith*, 10 December 1909, 9-10.
50. *Balagh* (Amritsar) 13/9 (September 1936), Sirat Ahmad-ud-Din, 22.
51. During the same year he had his first, and probably last, face to face encounter with Sana'ullah Amritsari who was to challenge the religious doctrine of Maulwi 'Abdullah and that of his likes throughout the later decades. Cf. *Secret Punjab Police Abstracts of Intelligence* (1900), § 785a and 1200c. The reported dissenting views of 'Abdullah Chakralawi might be a reference to one of his earliest tracts in which he had argued against the *tarawih* prayers—accepted as 'desirably binding' in the month of Ramadan with some differences about the details in its offering among Hanafis and Ahl-i-Hadith—as contradictory to Quran and Hadith.
52. For this public declaration of his 'heretical' views, Maulwi 'Abdullah was opposed and criticized in the Urdu press, especially by Ja'far Zattalli—a satirical Urdu journal. *Secret Punjab Police Abstracts of Intelligence* (1901), § 746a.
53. Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti, *Miyan Fazl-i-Haq aur unki Khidmat* (Lahore, 1997), 141-2.
54. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* (Lahore) 5, 13 (May 1908): 1-4.
55. Shaykh Chittu was a Hanafi Muslim who 'converted' to Ahl-i-Hadith and later to Ahl al-Qur'an under the influence of Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi. He had served as the custodian of the Chiniyan Wali mosque for almost 60 years. He also tried to tempt Sana'ullah Amritsari into accepting his offer for becoming the prayer-leader of the mosque that Shaykh Chittu was planning to erect with a considerable amount of money. Sana'ullah Amritsari refused the offer even though he had financial concerns at that time and was being disliked by members of his own Ahl-i-Hadith group for some of his ideas. Sana'ullah Amritsari, *Rasa'il-i-Sana'iyya* (Lahore, repr. 2006), 188-89.
56. *Secret Punjab Police Abstracts of Intelligence* (1903), § 397. The poor intelligence reporting is again reflected in a report dating to 1909 in which Maulwi Baha'-ud-Din of Dera Ghazi Khan is reported to have 'founded the new religion' called Chakralawi. He is also reported as preaching openly in Kahrof as a consequence of which there was some stir. *Punjab Police* (1909), § 1827. In a later reference for the same year, however, Ahl al-Qur'an is said to have been founded by 'Abdullah of Jhelum. The dogmatic differences of the sect with the rest of the Muslims are mentioned as: (i)



- they disallow use of *Adhan*; (ii) they have their way of slaughtering the animals; (iii) they have established select places of worship to which only the select are admitted; (iv) they have changed the rituals of *Namaz*. *Punjab Police* (1909), § 2718. Maulwi Baha'-ud-Din was just a disciple of Maulwi 'Abdullah. Some of his writings were published in *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an*.
57. Before Batalawi, 'Abdul Jabbar Ghaznawi had written a tract to counter the ideas spread by Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi. *Isha'at-us-Sunna* (Lahore), 19 (1902): 143.
  58. Years later Sana'ullah Amritsari demonstrated the impracticality of Maulwi 'Abdullah's description of the Prophet's authority by the way of an allegory: '[Suppose] Prophet is alive. He issues a religious command to both of us [that is, Ahl al-Qur'an and Ahl-i-Hadith]. The Ahl al-Qur'an asks: 'O Prophet is this command in Quran?' The Prophet says no but I am commanding you to do it. Ahl al-Qur'an says: 'You are a messenger to relay the Quran. Since you command is not found in the Quran therefore we are not bound to abide by it.' But the Ahl-i-Hadith agrees to follow the command readily.' Cited in *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 1, 1 (1922): 22.
  59. *Isha'at-us-Sunna*, 143. These and similar ideas were expressed by Maulwi 'Abdullah in his tract *Ta'id-ul-Qur'an* which he wrote in response to the writings of 'Abdul Jabbar Ghaznawi. Another prominent Ahl-i-Hadith scholar Ibrahim Mir Siyalkoti also debated the issue of Prophet's authority with Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi. For details of the discussion, cf. Maulana Muhammad Muqtada Asari 'Umari, ed. *Tazkira-tul-Manazirin* (Me'o, 2002), I, 279–88.
  60. *Ibid.*, 152–3.
  61. *Ibid.*, 157. He repeated the same argument in his *Tafsir* when he stated that the existence of a Hadith, whether authentic or fabricated, hardly makes any difference because the Quranic text does not need any external aid.
  62. *Ibid.*, 148.
  63. *Ibid.*, 170.
  64. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad—himself a target of Ahl-i-Hadith diatribes and polemics—also commented on the 'excesses' and 'flaws' in the religious approach of both Muhammad Husayn Batalawi and Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi as manifested in the written polemic between the two. He advised his followers neither to be adamant in insistence on Hadith as equal to Quran in terms of divinity nor to ignore it altogether. He reiterated his previous stance on Hadith by saying that *Sunnat* was more of an authentic source in determining the practice of Prophet and was preceded by Quran alone as a source of religious guidance. Hadith, according to this approach, had a conjectural status though Mirza Ghulam Ahmad did make statements favouring the role of Hadith in the religio-moral uplift of mankind. Cf. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Ruhani Khaza'in* (n.a., repr. ca. 1984), XIX, 209–12. A similar approach was later adopted by Aslam Jayrajpuri. For more details, cf. Chapter 5.
  65. *Isha'at-us-Sunna*, 209–11.
  66. For complete texts of *fatwas* against Maulwi 'Abdullah, cf. *Isha'at-us-Sunna*, 295–309. Maulwi 'Abdullah remarked that it was only the fear of the British Raj that barred his opponents from killing him. He wrote: 'I say to my brothers that more than the British Raj they should fear Allah and not to ignore the Book of Allah.' Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi, *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an bi Ayat al-Furqan* (Lahore, 1906), III, 74.
  67. This mosque is presently in possession of a Deobandi cleric. Qari Ahmad-ud-Din, the current prayer leader at the mosque, disclosed that the mosque remained vacant and in a ruined state until the late 1950s before some Deobandi clerics established their claim over it. What happened between Ahl al-Qur'an's occupation of the mosque

- and Deobandi takeover of it is not known. Interview with Qari Ahmad-ud-Din, March 2006, Lahore.
68. Maulwi 'Abdullah met him in Dera Ismail Khan in 1904. *Punjab Police* (1904), §248d.
  69. Maulwi 'Abdullah went to Dera Ismail Khan in 1907 as Nawaz Ahmad Khan's guest in order to complete his proposed translation and commentary of the Quran. The readers of the journal and Maulwi 'Abdullah's followers were made aware of this development in order to dispel the impression that Maulwi 'Abdullah had permanently left Lahore after failing to elicit much following in the city. Cf. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 5, 1 (November 1907): *be* [b].
  70. Al-Haj Maulana Fazlul Karim, trans., *Mishkat-ul-Masabih* (Lahore, n.d.), I, 144.
  71. *Sahifa Ahl-i-Hadith* (Karachi) 32, 11 (March 1952): 152.
  72. Cf. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 5, 4 (December 1907): 7.
  73. Chakralawi, *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an*, I-II, 2-4.
  74. For example Q 10:37 and 16:89.
  75. 'With clear proofs and writings; and We have revealed unto thee the Remembrance that thou mayst explain to mankind that which hath been revealed for them, and that haply they may reflect.'
  76. *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an*, I-II, 210-11.
  77. Q 4:113: 'Allah revealeth unto thee the Scripture and wisdom, and teacheth thee that which thou knewest not.'
  78. *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an*, I-II, 213. Maulwi 'Abdullah refers to Q 17:39 in this regard. It says: 'This is (part) of that wisdom wherewith thy Lord hath inspired thee (O Muhammad). And set not up with Allah any other god, lest thou be cast into hell, reproved, abandoned.'
  79. Q 4:59 says: 'O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end.'
  80. *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an*, I-II, 213-14.
  81. Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's chief critic Sana'ullah Amritsari responded that there were a number of verses which had been addressed to Prophet Muhammad alone. Verse 24:62 is an example in this regard which proves that the Prophet is to be distinguished from the rest of the Muslim community. This had been done solely to emphasize a distinction between the Prophet and the people similar to the one which exists between an officer and his subordinates. But in terms of applicability of commandments both remain at the same level. *Ahl-i-Hadith*, 22 December 1916, 3. Another of his opponent pointed out that there were some verses, like Q 33:50, which were specific to Prophet Muhammad alone while for others, like Q 49:2, he was exempted. Munshi Muhammad Zahir ud-Din, *Radd-i-Chakralawi* (Qadiyan, ca. 1907), 12-3.
  82. *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an*, I-II, 214-17. Elsewhere, Maulwi 'Abdullah stated his opinion that the verse in dispute could not be considered as referring to the Prophet because the address had been made to the people of all times and Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was not physically present for people of different ages. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* I, 2 (October 1903): 22-3.
  83. The Prophet may not be infallible but they are surely accepted by Maulwi 'Abdullah as truthful in all their dealings. For this reason he rejected those traditions or interpretations of Quran which suggested that Abraham had lied three times to save his life. Chakralawi, *Qasas al-Anbiya'* (Lahore, n.d.), 4 and 8.

84. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad was described by Maulwi 'Abdullah as restricted to having only four wives like all other Muslims. He deviated even further from the generally known accounts of Prophet Muhammad's private life to suggest that he never had more than one wife at a time. The term 'wives' in the relevant verses was interpreted by him as referring to the wives of the prophets in general and not specifically those of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH). *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an*, XXI, 39–42.
85. *Qasas al-Anbiya'*, 27–8.
86. *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an*, I-II, 43–9.
87. Chakralawi, *Halat-i-Isa Rusul-i-Rabbani wa Tardid-i-Auham Qadiyani* (Lahore, 1907), 15 and 66–7. Maulwi 'Abdullah believed that despite recent discoveries of places like Greenland, there remained a number of unknown islands and deserted places—like the Antarctic region—which might possibly be the hiding place of Jesus.
88. Occasionally in his writings, Maulwi 'Abdullah made reference to some 'controversial' Ahadith such as those reporting Prophet's cohabitation with his wives while the latter were in a ritual state of impurity or about his marriage with underage 'Aisha.
89. He followed Sayyid Ahmad Khan in attributing the motive for fabrication to acquisition of caliphate. The directive issued by 'Umar bin 'Abdul 'Aziz for the collection of Hadith material at the turn of the first century of Islam was likened by Maulwi 'Abdullah to the writing of district gazetteers under instructions from the British government for which the compilers relied on the gossips and fables of local story-tellers to record 'information' about a particular region. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 5, 1 (November 1907): 3–4.
90. *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an*, I-II, 220.
91. Such an approach was independently seconded by such scholars as Tamanna 'Imadi. For details, cf. Chapter 5. In the western academy, John Burton has offered a similar account of the history of Quran. John Burton, *The Collection of Quran* (Cambridge, 1977).
92. *Ibid.*, 15–6.
93. *Ibid.*, 25–8.
94. Chakralawi, *Risala az-Zakat wa Sadqat fe kama ja Ayat Bayyinat* (Lahore, 1906), 1–2.
95. Q 12:111; Q 16:89; Q 5:44–5.
96. Q 6: 50; Q 10:15.
97. *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an*, I-II, 100. Years later Maulana Maududi retorted in response to such an argument by saying that the details of Namaz—or, for that matter, many other aspects of Shari'at—have not been touched upon in Quran in great detail for it would have made Quran as voluminous as Encyclopaedia Britannica. Sayyid Abul 'Ala Maududi, *Tafhimat* (Lahore, 2006), I, 384.
98. That injunctions regarding the details of performances to be observed during Namaz were scattered in different chapters of Quran was ascribed by Maulwi 'Abdullah to a Divine 'strategy' whereby malpractices that had crept into the 'original' form of prayer were remedied gradually. It took some time before Namaz could be restored to the form in which it had always been observed by the prophets and followers of all monotheistic religions. Chakralawi, *Burhan-ul-Furqan' ala Salat al-Qur'an* (Lahore: n.a., repr. 1925), 258–9.
99. Maulwi 'Abdullah's expertise in Arabic grammar and his ability to 'dexterously' manipulate the meanings of terms was acknowledged even by his bitterest critic Sana'ullah Amritsari. *Ahl-i-Hadith*, March 1925, 2. Ghulam Ahmad Parwez (1903–85) also expressed a similar opinion. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Lahore), June 1975, 41.

100. *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an*, I-II, 89–90 and *Burhan-ul-Furqan*, 59. A similar approach in these and many other matters was later adopted by Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari in his writings on Namaz and other Muslim practices.
101. 'Establish worship at the going down of the sun until the dark of night, and (the recital of) the Qur'an at dawn. Lo! (the recital of) the Qur'an at dawn is ever witnessed.'
102. The proposition that *qayam* was the first act in the offering of prayer was derived from Q 4:102 which stated that: 'And when thou (O Muhammad) art among them and arrange (their) worship for them, let only a party of them stand with thee (to worship)....' Q 22:26 was also cited by him in this regard. *Burhan-ul-Furqan*, 141.
103. *Ibid.*, 143. The verses cited by Maulwi 'Abdullah in this regard were Q 2:143 and 2:238. The compulsion of facing the Ka'ba served as the sole reason in Maulwi 'Abdullah's brief description of 'Qur'ani Hajj'. According to him, the pilgrimage was not intended to show respect for a sanctuary that was located in the centre of the world and had been for all the previous prophets, but to make the worshippers believe that there was nothing sacred about the direction that they face during their prayers. Rituals like circumambulation around the Ka'ba, stay in Arafat and brisk walk between adjacent valleys of Safa and Marwa, were meant to ensure that the believers got to see the whole area thoroughly to be convinced that there was nothing polytheistic in their method of Namaz. *Tarjumat-ul-Qur'an*, I-II, 120–22. Maulwi 'Abdullah's successor Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali Khan Lahauri described the purpose differently by describing it as an annual consultative assembly of the Muslims. *Ishu'at-ul-Qur'an* 2/15 (January 1923): 12–5. This was similar to what was said by Amritsar based Ahl al-Qur'an ideologue Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari. However, Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali's article—though comparatively much brief and less elaborate in matters of details—was published years before Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din came up with similar ideas in his Tafsir. For details, cf. Chapter 5.
104. *Burhan al-Furqan*, 292; Cited in Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, 1999), 46.
105. *Burhan al-Furqan*, 153.
106. *Ibid.*, 156.
107. It says: 'Recite, then, of the Qur'an that which is easy for you. He knoweth that there are sick folk among you, while others travel in the land in search of Allah's bounty, and others (still) are fighting for the cause of Allah. So recite of it that which is easy (for you), and establish worship and pay the poor-due, and (so) lend unto Allah a goodly loan.'
108. *Burhan ul-Furqan*, 196–8.
109. It says: 'Say: Believe therein or believe not, lo! those who were given knowledge before it, when it is read unto them, fall down prostrate on their faces, adoring. Saying: Glory to our Lord! Verily the promise of our Lord must be fulfilled. They fall down on their faces, weeping, and it increaseth humility in them. Say (unto mankind): Cry unto Allah, or cry unto the Beneficent, unto whichsoever ye cry (it is the same). His are the most beautiful names. And thou (Muhammad [PBUH]), be not loud-voiced in thy worship nor yet silent therein, but follow a way between.'
110. *Burhan-ul-Furqan*, 224. He likens it to the mentioning of swine flesh in Quran without any supporting 'description' of it.
111. *Ibid.*, 356–7 and 365. Salutations were to be sent to all the prophets because Maulwi 'Abdullah did not believe that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) alone was deserving of this. According to Maulwi 'Abdullah, to say that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was

- superior than the rest of prophets went against Q 2:285. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 5, 6 (January 1908): 17.
112. Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's disciple Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali Khan did introduce a 'Qur'ani *Adhan*' after the death of his mentor. This allowed the Ahl al-Qur'an to object to 'non-Quranic' *Adhan* of other Muslims. The fact that the wordings of Qur'an had been suggested by some Companions and approved by the Prophet, was used by the Ahl-i-Hadith as an argument in favour of the authority of the Prophet for it suggested that no ritual or any aspect of belief could become binding without the sanction of the Prophet.
  113. *Burhan-ul-Furqan*, 317–8. Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's contemporary Egyptian scholar Muhammad Tawfiq Sidqi had also resorted to Salat-i-khawf or emergency prayers for deducing the number of *rak'at* from Quranic text. Juynboll, *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature*, 25.
  114. *Burhan-ul-Furqan*, 323–5.
  115. *Zakat al-Sadqat*, 30 and 38.
  116. Q 11: 87. *Burhan-ul-Furqan*, 172. Elsewhere he described his opponents as following the 'sunnat' of Pharaoh who used to quote Ahadith of Joseph when Moses recited to him verses from God. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 1, 2 (October 1903): 7.
  117. Amritsari, *Rasa'il Sana'iyya*, 168.
  118. *Balagh* (Amritsar) 13, 9 (September 1936), Sirat Alunad-ud-Din, 22.
  119. Muhammad Aslam Jayrajpuri, *Nawadrut* (Lahore, 1989), 325. In some other incidents as well, Maulwi 'Abdullah is reported to have bragged needlessly about irrelevant details instead of engaging in a fruitful discussion. For example, Hakim Nur-ud-Din, *Sahifa Ahl-i-Hadith*, 153; Khwaja 'Ibad Ullah Akhtar, *Mazahib-i-Islamiyya* (Lahore, 1952), 290–91. A more 'favourable' description of Maulwi 'Abdullah's personality is to be found in Khwaja Hasan Nizami's brief comments about him. Dr Abu Sulayman Shah Jahan Puri, *Khwaja Hasan Nizami: Khake aur Khaka Nigari* (Islamabad, 2007), 112–3.
  120. Ibrahim Chakralawi reportedly argued for his right to property which was turned down by his father because Ibrahim's argument was based on a Hadith. Muhammad Rafiq Asari, *Sultan Mehmud Muhaddis Jalalpur: Hayat, Khidmat, Asar* (Multan, 2006), 67–8. Only one of Maulwi 'Abdullah's grandson Qazi Yahya, however, adopted the religion of his grandfather and practiced it till his death in the 1950s.
  121. Rafiq Asari, *Sultan Mehmud Muhaddis*, 70–1. Maulwi Ibrahim's daughter and Maulwi Isma'il's sister Hajira was also a devout Ahl-i-Hadith. She donated a valuable land for the functioning of Dar-ul-Hadith al-Muhammadiyya—an Ahl-i-Hadith seminary—in Multan. Letter to author by Muhammad Rafiq Asari, Multan, 22 April 2007.
  122. The last days of Maulwi 'Abdullah and cause of his death has been differently reported by his sympathizers and adversaries. According to one report he was poisoned by his opponents. Khwaja Azhar 'Abbas, ed. *Qur'an Fehmi ke Qur'ani Usul* (Lahore, 2002), 7. Others emphasize the pain and suffering of Maulwi 'Abdullah in his late years as a sign of Divine punishment inflicted on him for his false ideas. The available information from different sources suggests that he died at the age of more than 65 years and was paralyzed and blinded by that time. For details, cf. Shah Jahan Puri, *Khwaja Hasan Nizami*, 113; Zafar, *Uloom-ul-Hadith*, 816. It has also been reported that few years before his death, Maulwi 'Abdullah married a young girl named Jamila (d. 1978). She bore him a daughter who later established a madrasa for girls in Abbottabad preaching 'Quranic Islam'. Salah-ud-Din, 'Tarikh wa 'Aqa'id Munkir-i-Hadith' (PhD Thesis, University of Punjab, 1992), 13–4.
  123. Source: *Census of India 1911*, 170. In the census reports for 1921 and 1931, the number of Ahl al-Quran rose to 326 and 440 respectively.



124. The glossary of Punjab castes does, however, refer to numerous 'Chakralawis' living in the Shahbaz Khel and Yaru Khel villages near Maulwi 'Abdullah's hometown in Mianwali and also in Dera Ismail Khan. H.A. Rose, ed. *Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* (Lahore, 1978), II, 147.
125. Shah Jahan Puri, *Khwaja Hasan Nizami*, 113.
126. Muhammad Iqbal seemed to have an interest in the contributions made by Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali on this topic or was at least aware of his writings. Shaykh 'Ara' Ullah, ed. *Makathib-i-Iqbal*, (Lahore, repr. 2005), 97-8.
127. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 4, 5-6 (April-May 1925): 20. Gayan Indar counted the reasons for which he gave up Islam in a tract titled *May ne Islam kiyun chora?* (Delhi, 1925). Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali held the impression that in order to prevent such incidents of conversion and avoid embarrassment during polemics, proponents of Hadith themselves refrained from quoting Ahadith in their arguments. He cited Sana'ullah Amritsari's example in this regard who, in an encounter with Aryas, laid down that he would only be liable to defend teachings of Quran and not any other Islamic text that might be referred. In his defence, Amritsari later said that the condition was only in response to Arya's restriction of their argument to Vedas to the exclusion of all of Dayanand's writings. *Ahl-i-Hadith*, March 1925, 3.
128. Maulana Muhammad 'Ali, *Maqam-i-Hadith* (Lahore, n.d.). Muhammad 'Ali's book laid out a systematized pattern of methodical argumentation which has continued to serve as a pattern for numerous recent works written in defence of Hadith. Despite the ingenuity of Maulana Muhammad 'Ali's work, it has not received direct appreciation in pro-Hadith literature probably because of its author's 'heretical' religious views.
129. Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali, *Tabligh-ul-Qur'an Nambar 8* (Lahore, n.d.), 27.
130. A challenge from Shi'a scholars was not unexpected. From the very beginning they were invited for a debate with Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 4, 13 (May 1907): 32.
131. This was reported in *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* according to which the Barelwi scholar responded by citing 'vulgar' traditions from Shi'a collections justifying temporary marriage and 'unnatural' sexual acts. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 4, 4 (February 1925): 7-8.
132. Sayyid 'Ali al-Hayri's statement cited in *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 4, 11 (September 1925): 24. For other Sunni groups, it was essential to interpret 'Umar's statement in a different way so as to prove his faith in the authority of the Prophet.
133. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 5, 4 (February 1926): 10-2.
134. Mistri Muhammad Ramazan was aided by a 'Quranic board of Ulama which comprised of Maulwi Muhammad Fazil and Maulwi Muhammad 'Alam (Chakwal), Maulwi Chiragh-ud-Din (Akalgarh), Maulwi 'Abdul Rahman (Gujranwala) and Maulwi Insha' Ullah (Sialkot). *Balagh-ul-Qur'an* (Lahore) 21, 10 (October 1976): 24-6.
135. *Balagh-ul-Qur'an* (Gujranwala) 1, 6 (June 1924): 10; 1, 9 (September 1924): 3 and 5-6. *Balagh-ul-Qur'an*, like *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an*, printed series of articles about Hadith to highlight 'objectionable' and 'vulgar' portions of its content which were being used by Christian missionaries and Arya Samajis to alienate educated young Muslims from their religion. *Balagh-ul-Qur'an* 1, 6 (June 1924): 13.
136. *Tulu'-i-Islam*, June 1975, 43.
137. Another example of such an 'independent Ahl al-Qur'an scholar' was that of Pitzada Ibrahim Hanif (1891-1960). He was a learned man of letters and knew several languages but, as described by his biographer, he was more of a 'religious anarchist' who failed to offer coherently argued writings in the elucidation of his doctrines.



- favoring Quran and opposing the Hadith literature. For details, cf. Manzur-ul-Haq Siddiqi, *Ma'ir-ul-Ajdad* (Lahore, 1964), 153-74.
138. For details, cf. Maulwi Nur Husayn Garjakh, *Munkir-in-i-Hadith ki Tafasil-i-Arba'* (Gujranwala, 1956). Garjakh's brief treatise succinctly sums up the differences in ritual posturing and recommended salutations to be found in all the various modes of Qurani Namaz prescribed by different individuals.
  139. *Ahl-i-Hadith*, 5 May 1939, 4-5.
  140. But at the same time Muhammad-ul-Din did recognize that the rituals had to be observed during Namaz. *Balagh-ul-Qur'an* 2, 3 (March 1925): 17-8.
  141. Q 17:78.
  142. *Balagh-ul-Qur'an* 3, 4-5 (April-May 1926): 22-3.
  143. The details of this discussion were published by Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali under the title *Tabligh-ul-Qur'an number 8* (Lahore, n.d.). Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali accused Mistri Muhammad Ramazan of maintaining a rigid stance during the proceedings of the discussion. Mistri Ramazan's main contention that Quranic word *duluk* was equivalent to *Zuhr* prayers offered during the mid-day by Muslims, was refuted by Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali. He argued that the meanings of this word, as derived by Mistri Ramazan, were verifiable from Hadith collections alone and not from any authentic work of Arabic lexicography. *Tabligh-ul-Qur'an*, 16 and 19.
  144. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 5, 2-3 (December-January 1926): 8-12.
  145. *Balagh-ul-Qur'an* 2, 8 (August 1925): 22. He specifically mentioned *Balagh* published by Ummat-i-Muslima Amritsar and *Hanif* edited by Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal in this regard.
  146. The version given in *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* suggests that Shaykh Chittu only promised to contribute money for the purchase of house but never actually gave any money. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 3, 30-1 (April-May 1924): 28-9. In the judgment of Lahore High Court, however, it was noted that the property was bought with Shaykh Chittu's money. For details, cf. Maulabakhsh v. Amiruddin, *Annual Indian Register* (1920) Lahore, 384.
  147. *Ibid.*, 384. He reportedly set aside money in his Will with specific instructions that it be used to pursue the legal case for the possession of disputed property. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 3, 30-1 (April-May 1924): 28-9. Shaykh Chittu's heirs sought to dissociate themselves and their father from the charge of being the financier and disciple of Ahl al-Qur'an. In response to a special issue on Ahl al-Qur'an published by Lahore based Ahl-i-Hadith journal *Al-A'itah* in 1950s, a letter was sent by Chittu's progeny to the editor of the journal Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti saying that Shaykh Chittu had nothing to do with Ahl al-Qur'an. I am thankful to Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti for this information.
  148. *Annual Indian Register* (1920), 385. The Court applied the principles of Islamic law regarding endowments in this case since it did not consider Ahl al-Qur'an as non-Muslims. Chittu—as a Muslim like any other—and his endowment was, therefore, bound by the law applicable to Muslims generally. *Ibid.*, 386.
  149. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 4, 12 (October 1925): 15-7.
  150. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 5, 8 (March 1929): 16-7.
  151. Both had 'converted' to Ahl al-Qur'an creed in 1909. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 6, 1 (March 1909): 6-7.
  152. Qazi Yahya made an open appeal to retain Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali as in charge of affairs. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 5, 8 (March 1929): 18-9.
  153. *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* 10, 11 (April 1932): 27-30.

# 5

## Islamic Universalism: The 'Amritsari' Version of Ahl al-Qur'an, 1924–1952

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses Ummat-i-Muslima, an Ahl al-Qur'an group, established in Amritsar by Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari, and evaluates its character as an intellectual endeavour for the purpose of projecting Islam as a universal religion. It would be shown that such an idea, propounded by Ahmad-ud-Din, was premised on de-linking Islam from its Arabian connection as well as from any authority of the past that might constrain Islam's supposedly universal validity. Another theme of interest in this chapter would be to highlight how Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din and his followers tried to dissociate themselves with other groups and scholars holding similar ideas about Quran, Hadith and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In this regard, the writings of Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din and other scholars such as Aslam Jayrajpuri, Tamanna 'Imadi and Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi are extensively quoted to show how they distanced themselves from the Quranic exclusiveness of Maulwi 'Abdullah while, at the same time, attempted to seek sacred legitimacy for the current mode of ritual practices among the Muslims without yielding completely to the authority of the Isnad paradigm. The chapter also shows how the Ahl al-Qur'an ideas came to the forefront of religious polemics during the 1930s and registering a considerable impact on the minds of 'Muslim graduates'. The impact of these ideas is further gauged by taking note of the modifications by some important Ulama with regard to their stance on Hadith.

## 5.2. THE CITY OF AMRITSAR: RELIGIOUS POLEMICS AND INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS

The city of Amritsar, after the annexation of the Punjab by the British in 1849, continued to enjoy its status as one of the main academic and economic centres which it had come to acquire during Sikh rule. Its importance as a thriving manufacturing centre was because of its silk and pashmina shawl industries, manned mostly by Muslim migrants from Kashmir whose numbers continued to swell in the following decades. These Muslims played a vital role in Amritsar's intellectual-cultural milieu which was marked by visible signs of peaceful coexistence if not extensive interaction.<sup>1</sup> Like other parts of Punjab, Amritsar too, was vulnerable to religious controversies that were being waged, and polemics debated among the missionaries, Muslims, Arya Samajis and Sikhs. It had given rise to similar organizational responses among followers of different religions in Punjab as the means of warding off threats of conversion among their ranks and to ensure their training in modern education and firm grounding in religious doctrine. This was imperative in order to equip the believers with necessary prerequisites for the enhancement of status of the community and self, and enable them to stand by, with conviction, to the doctrines of their faith. This trend was distinctly marked in Amritsar where competing religious communities sponsored establishment of schools, colleges and organizations<sup>2</sup> in order to cope with the dynamics of changing socio-political conditions and economic imperatives, as well as the opportunities offered by colonial administrative policies which purported to reward communities in proportion to their numbers in census entries and educational merits of individual members. The acquisition of education was stressed to ensure respectable accommodation within the newly laid down colonial administrative setup and scheme of things. It was accompanied with an intensification of proselytizing efforts and calls for revising established religious doctrines or adhering more strictly to them because of the need to cope with changes inflicted by western education and other developments.

With similar concerns in mind, members of the Muslim community, mostly former and serving magistrates and privileged nobility, established Majlis-i-Islamiyya Amritsar in 1873 which was renamed Anjuman-i-Islamiyya Amritsar in 1882. Under its banner a number of schools were set up for Muslim students. As the number of students swelled, it was decided to work towards establishing a college. This plan finally materialized in 1933. Stalwarts like Faiz Ahmad Faiz, along with M.D.

Tasir and Akhtar Husayn Ra'ipuri, were among the faculty of the Islamia College, Amritsar.<sup>3</sup> In matters of religious concerns, the Anjuman impressed upon the Muslims to give up 'extravagant customs' and 'bad habits' that were of little economic feasibility. In their efforts to 'promote' Islam, the Anjuman even advertised for a preacher who could aid fellow Muslims to develop a better understanding of Islam and contest Christian missionaries and other non-Muslim assaults on their religion.<sup>4</sup> Several other organizations with similar objectives of promoting awareness among the Muslims regarding acquisition of modern education and inculcating religious spirit among them were also set up in Amritsar during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

Equally important was the fast growing network of religious seminaries as the Ulama increasingly came to the forefront as guides for Muslims in matters of faith and practice. Deobandi presence in the city appeared to be comparatively muted. Madrasah Nu'maniyya run by Mufti Muhammad Hasan Amritsari was one known centre of Deobandi leanings in Amritsar. There were, however, numerous individuals and families who had been trained in Deobandi traditions or were inclined towards sharing its ideas regarding prevalent 'un-Islamic' customs but preferred styling themselves as Hanafis so as to promote inter-sectarian harmony among Sunni Muslims.<sup>6</sup> A Barelwi journal, *al-Faqih* from Amritsar, which remained in print for decades, was immensely important in making the Barelwi's presence felt in the city and their participation in contemporary debates and controversies. With Muhammad Alam 'Asi's arrival in the city around 1908, the Barelwis had amid their ranks an eminent man of letters whose intellectual guidance was sought and admired even by their rival groups.<sup>7</sup> But of all the Muslim religious groups, Ahl-i-Hadith seemed to have firm grounding, as compared to the others in Amritsar in particular, and East Punjab on a whole. 'Abdullah Ghaznawi and his prodigious progeny had helped establish and staff an important Ahl-i-Hadith seminary named Taqwiyat-ul-Islam, which in turn, provided education for many of its future scholars, adherents and prayer-leaders. Ahl-i-Hadith presence in the city was strengthened by figures like Ahmad Ullah who belonged to nobility and patronized the Ahl-i-Hadith by sponsoring the building of three mosques in the city of Amritsar,<sup>8</sup> and—most importantly—by Sana'ullah Amritsari who successfully managed the publishing of a weekly journal *Ahl-i-Hadith* and held numerous engagements in polemics with rival Muslim sects, missionaries, Ahmadis and Arya Samajis,<sup>9</sup> as well as the newly established creed of Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari under the banner of Ummat-i-Muslima.

### 5.3. KHWAJA AHMAD-UD-DIN AMRITSARI (1861–1936): BACKGROUND TO HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari can be credited with popularizing and giving new dimensions to the new trend of thought regarding Hadith introduced by Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi in Lahore.<sup>10</sup> For Maulwi 'Abdullah, rejection of Hadith implied supremacy of the Quran as the only sacred text and possibility of deriving from it all the required information for religious beliefs and practices. Ahmad-ud-Din used the same argument for a more differentiated interpretation of Islam which could hold appeal as a rational, tolerant and universal religion for the followers of all creeds. Hence, for him, Hadith had to be rejected not so much to assert the supremacy of the Quran *per se*, but for its objectionable content and the need to accord the status of Divinity to the Quran alone. The Divine Quran, stripped of the burden of classical and medieval theological-philosophical offerings, Arab-centricity and connectivity with the juristic findings of the past, could then be offered as the most suitable option to resolve inter-religious differences and bring about harmony among the followers of different faiths. Apart from his critique on Hadith, this very version of Islamic Universalism is a novel—if not wholly pioneering—effort on part of Ahmad-ud-Din in the annals of modern South Asian Islam.

Ahmad-ud-Din came to acquire a rather free-thinking vein<sup>11</sup> due to the influence exercised on him by Ghulam-ul-'Ali Qusuri (d. 1889)—an Ahl-i-Hadith scholar who had moved to Amritsar in the later half of the nineteenth century to teach at a local madrasa.<sup>12</sup> During his formative years, when Ahmad-ud-Din was studying at a local Mission school where he had studied the Bible and was inclined to a more critical reading of the Quran, he came into regular contacts with Ghulam-ul-'Ali who, by that time, had begun to display his differences with the Ulama on a number of issues in his writings published as tracts or exegetical essays.<sup>13</sup> One such writing which later became relevant to the ideas espoused by Ahmad-ud-Din was published in 1878. It dealt with the 'incident of Pen' and stressed the point that only those of the Prophet's directives were binding which had a divine origin and not the ones in which he was required to consult his Companions for there existed no scope for consultations when it pertained to revelation. This was approved of by the Prophet's own attitude through the incident cited by him in which he is reported to have remained silent in response to 'Umar's arguments.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from Ghulam-ul-'Ali Qusuri, Ahmad-ud-Din does not seem to have been formally instructed in religious studies by any other scholar. In this respect he was largely self-educated and familiarized himself with the knowledge of religious literature of Islam and certain modern fields of knowledge, like Geography, Geometry and Logic—usage of which figured prominently in his writings, especially Tafsir. But it was probably because of Ghulam-ul-'Ali's influence that Ahmad-ud-Din, without being bonded to a particular madrasa of any sect as a student, ideologically leaned towards Ahl-i-Hadith early in his life. The influence of Ghulam-ul-'Ali's thought on Ahmad-ud-Din was first reflected in his article on the wives of the Prophet published in 1888 in which he took the plea, vis-à-vis Christian Missionaries, that the Quran alone was the sacred text of Islam and any objections raised on the authority of other books held no validity.<sup>15</sup> His renunciation of Hadith literature altogether, however, came about later in life when he incidentally listened to a Friday sermon in which the prayer leader referred to a Hadith on Prophet Moses which reported that Moses slapped the Angel of Death for trying to wrest his life away from him. It occurred to Ahmad-ud-Din that this sort of behaviour was unbecoming and demeaning to the stature of a prophet. He probed further to find more 'objectionable' stories cited in the Hadith collections. For him, most disturbing were the ones which talked of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) coming under the spell of black magic at one point in his career as a prophet and accused Abraham of lying three times to save his life. With his increasing scepticism of the veracity of Hadith literature, Ahmad-ud-Din approached a prominent Ahl-i-Hadith scholar of Amritsar 'Abdul Jabbar Ghaznawi, for resolution of his mental confusion. In the discussions that ensued, Ahmad-ud-Din could not be convinced of arguments in favour of Hadith put forth by his fellow Ahl-i-Hadith, and came to regard them as inauthentic and worthy only of selective usage.<sup>16</sup> This served to complete his transformation from a *ghayr muqallid* Ahl-i-Hadith to a free-thinking Islamic scholar who severed his links with referential works of the past and texts of Hadith elevated to divine planes, and confidently espoused in his religious writings an ingenious interpretation of Islamic beliefs and practices.

In 1914, he rose to prominence with a critical appraisal of Islamic law of succession in a treatise titled *Mu'jizat-ul-Qur'an*. It curried favour even with some conservative Ulama like Sulayman Nadawi who appreciated Ahmad-ud-Din's efforts in bringing existing practices of law in conformity with the teachings of Islam.<sup>17</sup> But most found its contents too radically revisionist to be acceptable. At one point, his job as a teacher at the



Islamia High School came under threat and could only be secured because the likes of Sayf-ud-Din Kichlu—the famous Congress leader from Amritsar and one of the people responsible for administering Anjuman-i-Islamiyya—were favourably disposed towards him and his ideas.<sup>18</sup> In the treatise, his special focus was on the right of an orphaned grandson to inherit a share from the property of his grandfather. In his opinion, death of the father does not terminate the connection between the grandson and the grandfather as the traditional version of Islamic law of succession proclaims. Denial of share of grandchildren in their grandfather's property, argued Ahmad-ud-Din, leaves them at the mercy of their maternal relations for sustenance or gestures of goodwill on the part of paternal uncles. This not only goes against the grain of natural laws of inheritance and distribution of shares, but also makes a mockery of the Quran's statement of grandchildren being one of Allah's bounties.<sup>19</sup> One of the chief critics of Ahmad-ud-Din's *Mu'jizat-ul-Qur'an*, was Ghulam Mustafa Qasmi who responded by drawing an analogy between an orphaned grandchild and a passenger with a third-class ticket dependent upon the discretionary power of the ticket-checker for upgrading of his ticket class. In response, Ahmad-ud-Din lamented the fact that the Ulama admit of ticket-checker's (i.e. grandfather) discretionary power to reward but do not take into consideration the seat allotted in the third-class compartment (i.e. the minimum allotted share) to a passenger (i.e. orphaned grandson) on account of the ticket he already possesses.<sup>20</sup> Such an attitude towards orphans and scant disregard for their rights could no longer be allowed to continue, especially at a time when the world war had erupted and thousands of young men were being led to the battlefields, hence, were in danger of losing their lives.<sup>21</sup>

#### 5.4. DISPUTING THE STATUS OF HADITH

By the early 1920s, Ahmad-ud-Din had gone public with his views about Hadith which he previously had been sharing mostly within the study circle of his friends or debating with Ulama in person.<sup>22</sup> The occasion for is going public came in 1923 in the form of his exchange of letters with Sana'ullah Amritsari on the topic of Revelation.<sup>23</sup> Ahmad-ud-Din initiated the discussion by distinguishing between two sources of guidance: Divine and Rational. While the Divine source was defined by him as the most definite source of guidance whereby the Will of God is made clear in unambiguous and clear terms, rational sources were regarded as having limitations of their own—even when their source was from the Prophet.

He pointed out that this difference between the two had been acknowledged by the Quran itself. Accordingly a direction was given to the Prophet to make consultations while making decisions about those affairs that fell outside the realm of revelation.<sup>24</sup> Sana'ullah, in his response, tried to broaden the scope of the Prophet's authority by drawing a comparison between the Prophet and a High Court judge. He stated:

Law making is the task of the legislature. It is not the duty of the High Court to make laws but if for any provision of law it issues a judgment, then it becomes as binding as law for the whole of province. And if a judge of Privy Council makes his opinion about an issue then it becomes binding for the whole of country even though the ruling itself is not law but only an interpretation and judgment in accordance with the law. The saying of the Prophet of God has similar relation with Quran.<sup>25</sup>

This helped reiterate oft-repeated description of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by the Ahl-i-Hadith as a mortal human being albeit divinely guided in matters of religious guidance and interpretation of the Quran to make it incumbent for the believers to obey him. This served to set him apart from ordinary mortals and commentators of the Quran. Ahmad-ud-Din, on the other hand, considered the Prophet to be in the same league as other exegetes and jurists and found it impossible for an individual with all his infirmities and shortcomings as a human to have a complete knowledge of the scripture which was meant to be relevant for all times and for all humanity. By proclaiming this he did not profess to be hurting the status of the Prophet but claimed to be elevating that of Revelation to its rightful place.<sup>26</sup> Such divergence of views did not allow the discussion to reach a conclusive end and was discontinued after an exchange of a few letters. However, this episode did serve to highlight Ahmad-ud-Din's academic credentials for he convincingly put forth his apparently untenable new ideas on Hadith and the Prophet in the face of opposition from the most well-known and fiery Ahl-i-Hadith scholar and polemicist, attributed with several honorific titles in recognition for his services in defence of Islamic dogma against the criticism of its various opponents.

Shortly afterwards, in 1924, a group of like-minded Muslims from Amritsar—mostly college-educated or professionals with an interest in Islamic studies without affiliations to a particular Muslim group or madrasa—inspired by Ahmad-ud-Din's revisionist critique of Hadith, rallied together to start a monthly journal by the name of *Balagh* under the editorship of Hakim Shahab-ud-Din Amritsari and assistance of

Muhammad Husayn 'Arshi (d. 1985).<sup>27</sup> It aimed to prove that the Quran alone was the Divine scripture and hence sufficed as a source of guidance. The contents and teachings of the Quran were to be widely disseminated by the newly established journal. More importantly, *Balagh* was set to serve the purpose of promoting the writings of Ahmad-ud-Din—especially his vision of Islamic universalism as enshrined in the charter of Ummat-i-Muslima organization whose foundation coincided with that of the journal.<sup>28</sup> The newly founded organization made a conscious effort to dissociate itself from the Ahl al-Qur'an Lahore.<sup>29</sup> In a later writing published in *Balagh*, Muhammad Husayn 'Arshi also highlighted the differences between the two. He accused the Ahl al-Qur'an Lahore of taking their 'Imams' as infallible, imitating them blindly, and in regarding their sect alone as the true representative of Islam, and their form of Namaz (prayer) as being the only one that was truly Islamic. In opposition to that, Ummat-i-Muslima professed to accord respect and consideration to Hadith and works of learned, pious scholars and believing in unity between believers of all monotheistic beliefs regardless of their forms of worship and other practices.<sup>30</sup> Such was the 'community of believers' envisaged by Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari under the banner of Ummat-i-Muslima.

### 5.5. AHMAD-UD-DIN'S ISLAMIC UNIVERSALISM

In its traditional usage, Ummat-i-Muslima denotes the world community of Muslims. But the term was given a different connotation by Ahmad-ud-Din. He broadened its scope to include within its contours true believers of all the faiths.<sup>31</sup> The crux of his idea of Islamic universalism called for all believers to be in agreement among themselves on the basis of what was common in their respective religions. This is best explained in his own words as stated in the preamble to his exegetical essays:

When followers of different religions assemble to present the qualities of their respective religions, they all say that our religion teaches love and greatness of God, calls for His worship, harmonizes the obedient with his real Lord and makes him (the adherent) resigned to the Will of his Master. [It teaches] justice and fair play with the creations of God, suggests a path of truth, rationality, harmony and tranquillity, and establishes freedom and equality. [It gives] rights to women and orphans, improves their conditions and strengthens mutual relations by calling to stand by agreed terms. [It] supports world unity and peace. [It] forbids vulgarity and irrationality, and religious oppression and revolt. [It] prevents from polytheism, superstitions, prejudices and bad

customs.<sup>32</sup> ... Is it not then proper for followers of all the faith to accept the principles agreed among all and not to allow their violation in all their other actions and statements? To make such a demand from the believers does not amount to putting them outside their faith but serves to emphasize establishing the faith in real and actual [spirit]. ... On dissenting issues, every person has the right to a practice in the way he finds it appropriate while being conscious of a better reward in the Hereafter and fear of Allah. But for these differences he should not condemn or accuse the other nor deny them [possibility of] salvation.<sup>33</sup> ... Quran is full of such statements [favouring unity of faiths]. It resolves differences and disputes between followers of religions, teaches them to co-exist with peace and unity, and calls for mutual cooperation.<sup>34</sup>

Having stated that all religions had one common theme of promoting a belief in the unity of God and regard for the whole of humankind as creation of a single Supreme Being, Ahmad-ud-Din asserted that these commonly agreed principles, vital for peaceful mutual coexistence of followers of different faith, were best enshrined in the Holy Quran. The Quran alone could serve as an arbiter of Truth acceptable for all and as a panacea for an effective and judicious resolution of sectarian divisions in the world. It was a substantiation of this view of the Quran which then ensued and ran throughout the writings of Ahmad-ud-Din in which he purged Islam of its 'Arab characteristics' that had reduced Islam from a world religion to one with distinct local traits,<sup>35</sup> and redefined the role of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)—or for that matter all other prophets—in determining its beliefs and practices. These two concerns, along with the need for a rational and more humane interpretation of the Quran, had to be simultaneously addressed because of their inextricable proximity to each other. It was because, in Ahmad-ud-Din's view of world religions, an exultation of prophetic figures had—in the first place—led to schisms within the believers and an undue regard for religious practices that were otherwise subject to variations on the basis of regional, climatic and cultural differences. He identified the problem with the followers of a religion who, out of their immense reverence for its founding figure, catapulted their prophets to a stature on par with God, and pressed for his words and actions to be followed by all in minute details. Since every religion had its own peculiar figurehead, a dissent in the ranks of worshippers of One God became unavoidable. He argued that it was for this reason that the Quran called for belief in the true teachings of all the prophets and did not allow for the superiority of one over the other. Hence, the essential component of declaration of faith for Ahmad-ud-Din was to testify that there is no god but Allah without there being any need

for an addition in this expression.<sup>36</sup> Ahmad-ud-Din's critique of traditional Muslim attitude regarding Hadith and the Prophet was, thus, not entirely hinged on dissociating Islam from controversial content of Hadith literature, but was also derived from an impulse to 'de-construct' an Arab-centric interpretation of Islam to be replaced with one amenable to more universal values.

With regard to the Prophet, Ahmad-ud-Din further refined his ideas and presented them in a more concretely theological framework as he again engaged himself in a written polemic with Sana'ullah Amritsari in 1929. The discussants did not debate the historicity of Hadith literature or scrutinize its contents. The focus of the debate was whether, in the first place the Prophet had been sanctioned the authority to dictate religious practices binding for his followers. Ahmad-ud-Din initiated the debate by articulating an idea of limited authority of the Prophet. According to him, God did not want an unconditional acceptance of every word of His Prophet. But in cases where obedience to the Prophet was mandatory, the Muslims were expected to do so unreservedly. In this way all the prophets had a commanding authority but the 'actual commanding authority' (*asal mata'*) rested with God alone.<sup>37</sup> In his interpretation of the term *asal mata'*, Sana'ullah laid down that the actual commanding authority in the sense of not requiring any external support or rationale, had two kinds: (i) actual commanding authority in itself (*asal mata' bi'l zat*); and (ii) derivable actual commanding authority (*asal mata' bi'l ghayr*). Just as God's actual commanding authority did not need to be dependent on any reason or argument, in the same way, the Prophet's authority—as a derivative from that of God's—stood in no need for any such support.<sup>38</sup> Ahmad-ud-Din responded by saying that the obedience extended to the teachings of the Prophet did not comprise a separate entity as Revelation, rather they were just his legal-administrative decisions which had to be accepted as commanded by God. Hence the actual commanding authority remains with God. This provided Sana'ullah with a reason to argue that in case the Prophet was to be obeyed as a ruler under the rubric of God for legal-administrative affairs, then the same could be held valid for obeying him as a prophet in matters of religion even outside the Quran.<sup>39</sup> In Ahmad-ud-Din's opinion, doing that would bring the Prophet to the level of infallibility and broaden the sphere of activities in which his obedience would be binding, to ridiculous extremes. For example, if the method of Namaz was to be learned from the Prophet, then even the way to shoot arrows was to be learned through him because even that was mentioned in the Quran and demonstrated by the Prophet practically



during his lifetime.<sup>40</sup> About revelations—both *matlu* and *ghayr matlu*—being derived from the same source, Ahmad-ud-Din said that there were instances in the Prophet's life when revelations stopped and his opponents mocked him. The Prophet was commanded by the Quran to declare that he does not say anything on his own account which clearly indicated that Revelation only applied to the Divine Scriptures and not to the Prophet's own words. For this reason neither the words of the Prophet could be termed as being God's words; nor is the Quran described as Hadith.<sup>41</sup> Also, since legal-administrative obedience of the Prophet, as commanded by God, was conditioned by the circumstances in which Muslims had set up their own state and were expanding militarily—especially after the conquest of Mecca—it could not be used as an argument for legitimizing unconditional surrender to the Prophet's decisions and acts regarding religion.

## 5.6. HUMANIZING THE PROPHETS

Any attempt at mitigating the authority of the Prophet had also to correspond to the need of emphasizing the fallibility of his actions and a mere human understanding of the scripture, at the expense of a more sacred image of the Prophet as a recipient of Divine endowments and favours, projected by Hadith and even—to some extent—by the Quran. The most important question in this respect was whether the Quran could have been revealed to someone else or was the Prophet especially chosen and uniquely fitted for this task by special faculties created in him by Divine grace. If the latter version was to be accepted, it made sense to accord to all his words and actions a similar revelatory aura. In order to refute such an argument, Ahmad-ud-Din firmly reiterated his belief in the ordinariness of the Prophet, and stated that he was devoid of any special and divine personal characteristic and described the revelation of the Quran to his heart as God's favour to him even though the Prophet himself did not expect to be its recipient.<sup>42</sup> If prophets were to be accorded special status for their roles as recipients of revelations, then similar attitude should be reserved for Angels who served as intermediaries between them and God.<sup>43</sup> Or, alternatively, those verses in the Quran which suggested a special bonding between God and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)<sup>44</sup> needed to be differently interpreted. For example, the reason God explicitly cautioned the Muslims in the Quran not to raise their voices in the presence of the Prophet, was likened by Ahmad-ud-Din to observance of protocols and etiquettes in the presence of a president or



chairperson of council.<sup>45</sup> In a similar vein, he explained *Surah al-Lahab* as referring to any angry opponent, turning red with wrath and fury bent upon wiping out the religion of Islam with his wealth and influence.<sup>46</sup> As for the descriptions of the apparently supernatural events ascribed to different prophets in the Quran, Ahmad-ud-Din offered interpretations similar to those held out by Sayyid Ahmad Khan based on the theory of Naturalism. He shared Sayyid Ahmad Khan's idea of God as revealed in cosmos and man, and reflected in the laws of Nature, i.e. the 'Work of God'. In his enumeration of these ideas, Ahmad-ud-Din stated:

The authority of God is supra-natural. In Nature, the True Sage has arranged for series of causes and effects. All these cause are subjugated and obedient to Him. Allah assigns tasks specific to a cause and does not have to come and act as a servant to perform [a task]. ... If God starts accomplishing tasks on His own without involving the specific causes, then that would amount to, in the first place, His working as a servant and subjecting to, and becoming a component of, the Book of Nature; and secondly the very purpose of these causes would be rendered useless and we would not be required of making use of them. If we want to go to Lahore, just sit in a locked room and pray God to take us to Lahore. If a son is desired, the Spirit of God can cast His shadow to grant one. This is to insult God and consider His cause and effect chains as useless and irrational.<sup>47</sup>

The system of causes and effects thus established rules out the possibility for any supernatural event taking place. Hence:

There is no mention of the word miracle or supernatural anywhere in the Quran. But on many instances Allah does say that it is not for the Practice of Allah (*Sunnat Allah*) to be modified.... Since Allah has created everything in best and definite mould, there does not remain any need for change or abrogation in anything. Whatever the Wise God wants can be accomplished within the scope of the best and definite sources and rules set by Him. So when all that is willed by the Lord of lords can be appropriately accomplished, then there does not remain any need for Him to make changes in the best and definite sources and rules (established by Him)...The works of earlier prophets and messengers are projected as coloured by the supernatural, but the people of that age are not shown to have been affected in the way one could call the natural reaction to witnessing a supernatural event. If the signs shown by Moses were supernatural then why did Pharaoh (and opponents) laugh at them? Why did the people of Israel have to secretly escape from Egypt? How could Pharaoh dare attempt to go after them to catch them? For the people of Israel themselves, these signs did not have the impact that Samiri's golden calf had on them. They were nearly on the verge of killing Aaron. And then as

soon as they reached at the other side of the river, they said: 'O Moses create for us a god as the people here have.'<sup>48</sup>

Ahmad-ud-Din found 'natural factors' at play in different stories narrated by the Quran. In the case of Moses, as he smote his iron rod against a rock about which he had an intuition that it could possibly be a source-base of a stream, water seeped out of its cracks. About the magical display of powers between Moses and court magicians of Pharaoh, Ahmad-ud-Din stretched the meanings of relevant verses too far in search of a natural explanation and for establishing a causal link. Accordingly, Moses' rod did not become a serpent. It remained a rod but with its movements it appeared to be moving like a snake. The reason for this movement in rod was sought in natural laws: In the days of Moses, Mount Sinai was an active volcano. This volcanic activity is testified to by frequent earthquakes as reported by the Quran. When Moses became unconscious while conversing with God on Mount Sinai, it was because of one of the earthquakes. These volcanic eruptions gave rise to electric currents in the nearby valley. A tree in that valley with green leaves—a colour that is considered to be more receptive to electricity—used to glow with its current. With Moses wandering in the valley with bare feet, he became more absorbent of the current and it became possible for him to use this current in making the rod move when required.<sup>49</sup>

Of more relevance to his Muslim readership were Ahmad-ud-Din's views on certain supernatural episodes in the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to which a passing reference had been made in the Quran. The most important of these incidents is that of *Mi'raj* or ascension to Heavens. In the *ayat* 17:1 of the Quran, there is mention of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) being shown signs of God in a nocturnal journey. Ahmad-ud-Din's exegetical comments took the supernatural element out of this incident by confining the occurrence of the said event within the bounds of areas adjoining Mecca. This meaning was arrived at by interpreting the term *Aqsa* used in the verse as not referring to a particular mosque in Jerusalem but to any mosque at the distant end of a town. In this sense of the word there could not have been a mosque with the name of *Aqsa*. The area in which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was shown around was, therefore, located in the outskirts of Mecca at a place in the blissful vicinity of the sacred mosque of Mecca and Arafat. The purpose was to show the Prophet signs of nature and instruct him in revelation. Had *Mi'raj* or other supernatural events associated with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)—like 'splitting up of Moon', as *Surah Al-Qamar* is

interpreted as implying—then it could not have been possible for the Meccans to continue opposing him.<sup>50</sup> If Meccans had acquiesced in the face of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) supernatural powers, this coercive logic of miracle would have been in contradiction to the cherished idea of need for revelation or use of one's rational faculties. Hence, in Ahmad-ud-Din's concept of prophethood, it was deemed imperative that a prophet must be an ordinary human being so as to fulfil the very purpose of serving as inspiring and convincing role models for the rest of humanity. Normal persons appointed as prophets who remained steadfast in treading the path of God to the point of success without getting deterred or astray in spite of all their infirmities and weaknesses, suggested exemplary modes of imitable action for all others with similar deficiencies.<sup>51</sup> A supernatural human being, on the other hand, could not have inspired others to emulate his character or life pattern.<sup>52</sup> Such a conceptualization of prophethood was in synchrony with Ahmad-ud-Din's interpretation of the Quran in which prophets were shown to be lacking miraculous attributes and emphasis was laid on the warnings issued and admonitions made by God to His prophets for acts of disobedience.

This 'ordinariness' of prophets was suggested by Ahmad-ud-Din as indicative of their inability to offer authoritative interpretations of the revealed texts. He argued that parts of revelation could not even be properly comprehended by them. For this reason there did not arise a possibility of an intelligible and binding interpretation expected of them. One obvious example is that of *huruf-i-muqra't* in the Quran. These are certain abbreviated letters with which some chapters of the Quran begin with. The general view among the Muslim scholars is that God alone is aware of the real meaning and significance of these letters though many interpretations have been offered, mostly by Sufis. In Ahmad-ud-Din's view, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself was unaware of the meanings of these letters but his honesty in relaying the message of God faithfully could be seen in the fact that he delivered the whole message without omissions.<sup>53</sup> Or, for that matter, the incident referred to in *Surah Al-Mujadilah*—where a woman seeking redress of her complaint refused to accept Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) decision which the latter had to revoke as a late revelation from God sided with the objections raised by the complainant—made it abundantly clear that Prophet's judgments were neither error-free nor did they have a binding authority.<sup>54</sup> At best obedience to prophets was limited to revelations received by them. In matters other than Revelation, prophets were just like other pious men of their communities who strove to make best use of their capabilities to

arrive at an understanding of the sacred texts revealed to them. As for matters pertaining to administration and governance, they were specifically instructed by God to make decisions in consultation with others and even these were valid only till they were revoked by a later consensus.<sup>55</sup> Ahmad-ud-Din further added that not only were Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) legal-administrative decisions and interpretations of the Quran time-constrained and possibly erroneous, they had been poorly recorded in the form of Hadith books to offer credible references to his actual practices.

But since Ahmad-ud-Din had repeatedly referred to the Quran alone as the source of guidance<sup>56</sup> and reiterated a theological impossibility of the Prophet exercising a commanding or binding stature, it was of lesser significance for him to probe the historicity of Hadith. More important to him was the so-called revelatory status of Hadith as *wahi ghayr matlu*. In discussing that, the question of historicity of Hadith literature did figure but only as means of highlighting its inferiority in comparison to the Quran. This is effectively summarized in his comparison between the two:

... God never ever promised to preserve the Ahadith nor are they have practically been Divinely protected (from fabrication). The Ahadith are concocted, weak and conjectural. They have not been written down by the Prophet of Allah or the Companions. But for Quran, God himself has promised to preserve it and its copies written by the Companions are actually found in the present world.<sup>57</sup>

But Ahmad-ud-Din did contest certain historical narratives to be found in Hadith literature which he found to be impinging upon Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) character. The contents of such traditions, in Ahmad-ud-Din's opinion, served as malicious propaganda material for the benefit of Islam's opponents insofar as these Ahadith effectively levelled allegations of moral and religious lapses serious enough to invalidate Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) claims of prophethood and recipient of God's final and most perfect revelation.<sup>58</sup> Like Sayyid Ahmad Khan, he stressed most importance to disputing the reports about Muhammad's (PBUH) personal life as elucidated in certain Ahadith. While, for most other incidents in the Prophet's life Ahmad-ud-Din could simply doubt the possibility of their occurrence in the first place, the same could not be done with regard to reports of tensions within Muhammad's (PBUH) household, as Quran too had explicitly dealt with these. In these cases, he gleaned historical information provided by the Quran and fitted it into his desirable projection of the Prophet's image as bearer of middleclass

moral values. The 'real' story which then appeared absolved the Prophet of sexual indulgence with his newly wedded wife as the cause for conflict with the rest of his wives.<sup>59</sup> According to Ahmad-ud-Din's version of the incident, the dispute started when the Prophet came to know that some objectionable ritual or custom had been observed in his household in his absence. The Prophet warned his wife that this could be a cause for divorce and informed her to convey this message to his other wives in an appropriate manner. But she conveyed his message to the other wives in a manner which infuriated them. When the Prophet reprimanded her over this, the wife reacted and shot back that all his wives had been living in poverty for his sake, and they are still being threatened by divorce over a petty issue. The Prophet with a compassionate heart gave in to the pleas of his wives and swore never to divorce them. But he was reprimanded by God who instructed him to revoke his oath since it contradicted with the laws of divorce specified by God, that makes divorce an option when the circumstances so demand.<sup>60</sup>

### 5.7. HOW TO OFFER NAMAZ?

With religious instructions from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) not worthy of being taken into binding consideration, nor available in an historically credible form, Ahmad-ud-Din—like his predecessor, Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi, with similar approach to the Prophet and Hadith—offered the Quran as a repository of Divine knowledge required to steer the believers in all their dealings. The foremost question of concern to be addressed in the face of the ensuing information vacuum about religious practices was the ritual procedure of offering Namaz. Maulwi 'Abdullah had done so by twisting the meanings of Quranic verses to give shape to a new form of Namaz for which he was criticized even by Ahmad-ud-Din. By holding the view that definition of external form of Namaz and its ritualistic details were uncalled for, he absolved himself from the responsibility of providing sanctity to existing forms of prayer or concocting one of his own without the aid of Hadith and Sunnat. This gave him the leverage to argue for Islam's capability to serve as a universal religion with flexibility in observance of religious rituals, and adaptability in forms of worship so as to ensure compatibility with regional norms and cultural practices of people in different and distant parts of the world. This he claimed to infer from the Quran which does not specify the procedure for offering Namaz. A conspicuous absence of details regarding Namaz was taken by Ahmad-ud-Din as indicative of Almighty's prudent



Will in leaving the question open to the good sense of worshippers. Had He been inclined toward insisting on a fixed form of Namaz, it could easily have been done in two pages of Quranic text. But neither God nor His prophets were sent to draw inter-religious boundaries on the basis of forms of worship. This was the reason why the Quran mentioned monotheists and People of the Book from pre-Islamic era as steadfast in their prayers, but did not comment upon their mode of performance or the changes introduced in it with the advent of Islam. This clearly proved that prayers offered by Christians, Jews, Ahl al-Qur'an or any other, were the same in essence as those offered by the Muslims, and the external form of these prayers did not make any difference in terms of their rewards for the worshipper.<sup>61</sup> By holding this view there did not arise any need for Ahmad-ud-Din to search for a new form of Namaz or to find faults with the one already established among the Muslims. As for the timings of prayers and requisite state of cleanliness expected of a worshipper, Ahmad-ud-Din distinguished between two 'kinds' of Namaz. Each of them was meant primarily as means of remembering God and thanking the Almighty for all His bounties. He described the first 'kind' of Namaz as the 'ordinary way' of remembering God. It did not require any special arrangements to be made or salutations recited and could be carried out while performing works of daily routine or even while conversing with others. In the other 'special form' of prayer, however, one was required to avoid distraction by any other act. Another difference between the two forms was that the special one was time-constrained but in case of the ordinary prayers no such compulsion was put in place.<sup>62</sup> For both types of prayers there were neither fixed forms of observances nor specific verses for recitation.

When it came to details of ritual purity, Ahmad-ud-Din maintained that humans were instinctively trained in matters of everyday cleanliness and need not be instructed—especially for the prayers offered in private.<sup>63</sup> It was only when they were praying in a congregation that it was compulsory for worshippers to maintain strict cleanliness so as not to offend others.<sup>64</sup>

In order to convince all monotheists and true worshippers of the Lord to join the Muslims in their prayers, Ahmad-ud-Din recommended a few adjustments: No salutations should be sent specifically to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his clan or family; rather, they should be sent generally to the Prophets of all religions and pious men as a gesture of tolerance and sincerity on the part of Muslims. And secondly, those who do not know Arabic should be allowed to offer prayer in their own



language instead of reciting, perhaps uncomprehendingly, a text they did not understand.<sup>65</sup>

One other important hindrance that remained to be overcome before cajoling non-Muslim monotheists to join Muslim gatherings of worship was the compulsion of offering prayers in the direction of the Holy Ka'ba. Ahmad-ud-Din offered religious and 'scientific' arguments against adopting it as a necessary practice. In his opinion the reason God commanded the believers to make their direction different from that of Jews, was meant to show the hollowness of Jewish practice of fixing a particular direction towards which one should face in worship. It was absurd to think that God reprimanded Jews for one act and then sanctioned the same for Muslims by fixing an alternative *qibla* for them. What was meant by the Quranic verse 2:144 was not that worshippers ought to turn their faces towards the Ka'ba but in the direction where Namaz was offered *in* the Ka'ba. In his arguments to support this stance, Ahmad-ud-Din stated:

The Ka'ba too is a mosque. If it is locked and prayer is offered outside its precincts without a valid reason, that would be tantamount to stripping the Ka'ba of its status as a mosque. The very reason for which the Sacred Mosque was built was that prayers should be offered inside it. It was not built for Allah to reside in there but for humans [to offer prayers].... Abraham must have been offering prayers inside it along with the worshippers; this is why it is referred to as *Maqam-i-Ibrahim* that is, "the station of Abraham." Contrary to that, the infidels used to worship outside the Sacred Mosque .... It is also clear that inside the Sacred Mosque, Namaz would be offered in any direction. There cannot be found a direction even for the organization of congregational offering of prayers [inside the Ka'ba]. Congregational prayers would be offered in any one direction as mutually agreed upon or chosen by the Imam on his own.<sup>66</sup>

But he found it acceptable for Muslims to continue offering their prayers in the direction of the Ka'ba so as to preserve uniformity of practices among Muslims and to avoid unnecessary disputes.<sup>67</sup> His insistence of flexibility regarding the Ka'ba, Ahmad-ud-Din claimed that he was not weakening the bonds of solidarity among the Muslims but was attempting to increase the numbers of Muslim community by opening its doors to all those who offered prayers in their own ways but with the same devotion and sincerity.

In 'scientific' terms too, Ahmad-ud-Din found it hardly possible for the worshippers to be facing the Ka'ba in complete proximity to it, more

so if they were living in distant corners of the world. Through his geographical knowledge, he made the following observations:

For people living in far off places it is normal to expect a one degree change in the real direction of the Ka'ba. For a place situated at a thousand miles distance from the Ka'ba, a variation of one degree in the direction, would necessarily lead to a 17.5 mile deviation from the direction of the Ka'ba.... Which direction of the Ka'ba should be faced by people living on the east and west of meridian at 180 degrees? For them, the Ka'ba is located in the east and west at equal distances and similar directions. Then, if, a hundred mile, two hundred mile, thousand mile, two thousand mile, twelve thousand mile or twelve and half thousand mile distance from the direction of the Ka'ba does not make any difference, then what harm can there possibly be in variation greater than that of twelve and half thousand miles? In that case it becomes imperative that if the people of a city face towards the Ka'ba in the direction of west, they can likewise turn to facing the Ka'ba in the direction of the east. The only difference being that if in one direction the distance [from the Ka'ba] is twelve thousand miles, from the other side it would be approximately thirteen thousand miles because the circumference of the earth is approximately twenty-five thousand miles. And then which direction should those people face that are at the part of the earth which is exactly opposite to the Ka'ba on the other side of the earth? For them the Ka'ba is in the same direction in all conditions.<sup>64</sup>

In case there was nothing sacred about the Ka'ba as such, there did not remain any need for circumambulation around it as is the practice among the Muslims for the performance of Hajj. It did not make sense to accord such undue importance for a place that has little relevance for people outside Arabia.<sup>65</sup> Hajj is, then, interpreted by Ahmad-ud-Din in radically revisionist terms. He described Hajj as an annual national conference of the Arabs which could be convened by Muslims for discussions on different issues. It was meant to be a gathering that brought benefit for the people and did not require people to indulge in needless activities like stoning the Satan or kissing *some* black stone. This occasion could be used to invite important and notable analysts. Since it was supposed to be a large gathering, the 'delegates' were expected not to become a burden on the local population but to arrange for food so that no shortages occur. It is for this reason that Hajj 'delegates' are required to make sacrificial offerings of animals during the proceedings of Hajj, for slaughtering of animals in His name does not benefit God in any manner.<sup>70</sup> One is required to be virtuous and pious throughout the proceedings. The first day of Hajj conference should be sanctioned for committee discussions

and lectures. The second day should be the day of rest when delegates are transported out of the precincts of the city haircutting and washing their linen. On the third day the delegates will reach the Sacred Mosque in Mecca where funds will be collected and a report of the proceedings submitted.<sup>71</sup>

Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari's interpretation of the Quran belied thirteen centuries of Muslim scholarship on it; its exegesis; Hadith; and jurisprudence. But for him this stark contrast with the works and findings of previous scholars was justified because it upheld the supremacy of the Quran and the comprehensiveness and integrity of its text, and promoted inter-religious harmony and tolerance.<sup>72</sup> This was not to show utter contempt on his part for learned scholars of yesteryears but only to point out that reliance on non-Divine sources had clouded their reasoning. During his lifetime, Ahmad-ud-Din's controversial ideas had evoked strong reactions from religious quarters—especially by the Ulama of Ahl-i-Hadith who were spearheaded by Sana'ullah Amritsari. But Ahmad-ud-Din's critiques of traditional Islam could not be easily set aside or summarily dismissed. Even if his works did not inspire large-scale following, his ideas did aid in easing the Ulama-imposed restrictions on debating principles of faith. His ideas questioned exaggerated reverence for the Prophet and tame acquiescence to his authority; and generated a considerable academic interest leading to a fresh and more inquisitive probing of Islamic traditions by people of different religious outlooks and concerns.

### 5.8. INFLUENCE OF KHWAJA AHMAD-UD-DIN AMRITSARI'S THOUGHT PROCESS

From 1920s onwards, several other scholars began contributing to the ongoing controversies regarding Hadith. Abul Kalam Azad (d. 1958) was one such figure. It is probable that he came in contact with the Ahmad-ud-Din while he was serving as the editor of *Wakil* in Amritsar. A resulting influence appears in his own concepts of Hadith and Islamic law which are far from parallel to the views held by the majority Ulama. Resultantly, he acknowledged the reformatory value of Hadith regarding socio-ethical norms but refused to acknowledge it as a source of law.<sup>73</sup> His concept of *wahdat-i-adyan* (Unity of Religions) was also not very dissimilar to that of Ahmad-ud-Din.

Ahmad-ud-Din's link with 'Allama Muhammad Iqbal was, however, more direct and was facilitated by Ahmad-ud-Din's disciple Sufi

Tabbassum (d. 1978) and Muhammad Husayn 'Arshi Amritsari. A meeting was arranged between the two in 1925 during which a wide array of topics, ranging from exegesis to metaphysics were discussed.<sup>74</sup> In a letter that Iqbal wrote to Tabbassum, he suggested:

It would be best if he [Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din] could pen a comprehensive account of Islamic Shari'at in which matters pertaining to religious performances and practices—especially practices—are debated on the basis of Quran alone. Such a book is badly needed these days.... For a long time we have been hearing that Quran is a comprehensive book and the best propounder of its own perfection. Every single issue of *Balagh* Amritsar and Maulwi Hashmat 'Ali Lahauri's *Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* discusses that. What is required is that this perfection be practically demonstrated by proving that all the needful regulations pertaining to human affairs are present in it and can be distilled from such and such verse. Moreover, rules relating to religious observances and affairs (especially the latter) that are being administered in other nations at the moment should be criticized in the light of Quranic viewpoint to expose their absolute defectiveness.<sup>75</sup>

Iqbal's emphasis on Quran-only approach was complemented by his scepticism towards Hadith literature. He played down the role of Hadith as a source of law on the account of its dubious historical basis.<sup>76</sup> Nor did he appear to be willing to allow Hadith, Sunnat or consensus of the Prophet's Companions to abrogate a particular ruling of the Quran. In his correspondence with Sulayman Nadawi on issues of varied theological-dogmatic concerns, Iqbal asked him about the possibility of abrogation of Quranic injunction by the Muslim community. Nadawi's answer to this was in the negative and relegated the authority of establishing a ruling contradictory to the Quran to the consensus of the Companions of the Prophet. The presumption being that there must have been a relevant Hadith which served to abrogate the Quranic ruling but was not recorded for some reason.<sup>77</sup> But Iqbal displayed serious reservations over this thesis. A similar concern was expressed by another of Iqbal's and Ahmad-ud-Din's contemporaries, 'Allama Mashriqi (d. 1963) of the Khaksar Movement. Mashriqi, too, was born in Amritsar and had studied in England and Germany before organizing a semi-militant corps of volunteers with their headquarters based in Lahore. The primacy of the Quran is a cardinal point in his religious doctrine. According to him, the Quran was in no need of any defective philosophy, lexicographic reference or an authentic or inauthentic Hadith for elaboration of its text. A true Muslim has to accept that the Quran precedes Hadith and to consider Hadith as

preceding the Quran is as vain as putting the horse before the cart. By doing that neither of the two would be able to move.<sup>78</sup> His views about the historicity of Hadith literature were mostly a reiteration of Goldziher's thesis about its compilation. Mashriqi's somewhat more original contribution to ongoing discourse on Hadith came in a later writing in which he criticized Hadith as detached from its specific context. He opined:

Hadith, because they were stray utterances of the Prophet separated from the context and the atmosphere of the conversation, and did not even sometime mention the status of the man to whom the conversation of the Prophet was addressed, created a tremendous confusion in the original teaching of the Quran, and Islam became even ten times more sectarian in its teaching aspect.<sup>79</sup>

Such a deviation from Divine commandments towards the human agency of the Prophet was attributed by him to material decay of Muslims and sapping of their vigour for action. To rectify this situation, Mashriqi's Quran-centric approach was meant to revitalize Muslim energies and translate them into political action for pursuit of worldly gains. He considered such an achievement a more significant component of faith than the drudgery of spiritless observance of prayer rituals. For this approach he was derided by the Ulama<sup>80</sup> but he remained convinced that people of the West were truly deserving of God's Caliphate on earth and preferred candidates for salvation by the Almighty.<sup>81</sup> On his part, he took the Ulama to task for their obscurantist beliefs; lack of progressive outlook; and their teachings as being contrary to the egalitarian spirit of Islam.

Similar views regarding the content and validity of Hadith literature were being expressed by other Western educated Muslim scholars. Mumtaz Ali, editor of an Urdu magazine *Tehzib-i-Niswan* for women, reemphasized Sayyid Ahmad Khan's suggestions of content-analysis of traditions rather than relying on transmission chains for authentication of a Hadith.<sup>82</sup> Niyaz Fatehpuri, a noted writer and editor of the Urdu journal *Nigar* contributed a series of articles in his journal about 'objectionable' Ahadith that permitted the capturing of slaves; possessing concubines; and killing apostates. He also subjected to criticism the prevalent form of Namaz as being an accretion to what had originally been stipulated by the Quran in terms of number of prayers and other related aspects.<sup>83</sup> Having discarded Hadith, Niyaz Fatehpuri later went to the extent of declaring the Quran as being the word of Muhammad (PBUH) and not of God. For



this purpose, he presented a list of questions to Muslim scholars and academics in which he outlined his case against Quran's Divinity. The Ummat-i-Muslima, as a claimant of upholding Quranic excellence as a Divine text, invited responses from scholars all over South Asia. The essays so collected were then published in a special issue of *Al-Bayan*.<sup>84</sup>

Equally surprising was the criticism of *Sahih Bukhari* by a rather conservative saint-scholar Khwaja Hasan Nizami. He accused Bukhari of being under the influence of government authorities for the reason that he did not take any traditions from *Ahl al-Bayt* (Household of the Prophet) even though he did cite traditions from those involved in killing Husayn—the beloved grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Among the scholars who were not professedly linked with Ummat-i-Muslima, Muhibbul Haq (d. 1954) came closest to sharing Ahmad-ud-Din's views on certain aspects of beliefs and practices. He, too, did not give much importance to the rituals of Namaz. In his presumption, the Prophet had continued the practice of the People of Book, albeit with some modifications. He argued that if Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) mode of worship was radically different from that of *Ahl al-Kitab* (the People of the Book) then he could not possibly have led prayers of all the prophets during his heavenly journey as is reported in certain traditions.<sup>85</sup> Still, he did not discard Hadith altogether nor was completely dismissive of Prophet's authority.<sup>86</sup> But he did call for a criterion for Hadith authentication which was stringent enough to give way to the Quran as the only arbiter between truth and falsehood. For him, the notion of 'rationality', too, was unworthy of dependence because of its conditioning from the environment, family background, and theological inclinations of the scholar.<sup>87</sup>

Hence, it appears that by 1920s sporadic dissenting voices with regard to the Isnad paradigm in general, and Hadith in particular, had begun to be raised by both Western educated and more traditionally trained scholars who had no outward association with Ummat-i-Muslima, or any other Ahl al-Qur'an group for that matter. What helped to promote these ideas even further was the regular publication of *Balagh* which served as a platform to broadcast Ahmad-ud-Din's views and counter the polemics of rivals. The journal also promoted links with other scholars who advocated a similar approach regardless of whether their ideas tallied or differed with those of Ahmad-ud-Din. Not all of them were based in Punjab. Muhibbul Haq, Aslam Jayrajpuri, Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi, Tamanna 'Imadi and Sayyid Maqbul Ahmad were based in different parts of North India and shared some of Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari's



ideas on Hadith even though they were not necessarily inspired by him. They did, however, contribute articles to *Balagh* and attended gatherings arranged by the Ummat-i-Muslima.<sup>88</sup>

### 5.9. ASLAM JAYRAJPURI (1881–1955) AND THE IDEA OF SUNNAT-I-MUTWATIR

One of the contemporaries of ‘Abdullah Chakralawi and Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari was Aslam Jayrajpuri—Professor of History and Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia in Delhi and son of a notable Ahl-i-Hadith scholar Salamat Ullah Jayrajpuri (d. 1904). Aslam Jayrajpuri provided a synthesis of the Hadith-sceptical theories and Quran-only approaches propounded by his like-minded scholars to further the discourse on the questioning of Hadith literature, along with the other aspects of Isnad paradigm, and the relative positioning of Prophetic authority in comparison to that of Quranic commandments, toward its dialectical conclusions.

In his numerous writings, Aslam Jayrajpuri has dwelled upon the status and history of Hadith in detail. As a historian of Islamic history, he was better trained and informed to write extensively about the history of Hadith literature, the socio-political context during the initial centuries of Islam and other relevant details. In his works he discredited the existing corpus of Hadith on many counts. He argued that the instructions given by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself against the compilation of his sayings were very clear and were only exceptionally deviated from. He admitted the learning and circulation of Ahadith at a limited level during the Prophet’s lifetime but disregarded the historicity of exaggerated accounts about Companions like Abu Huraira—the reporting authority for thousands of Ahadith—who has variously been described as keeping the constant company of the Prophet to learn and record all that the Prophet had to offer. In the presence of clear instructions of the Prophet against the recording of his words and absence of ‘professional’ keepers of Hadith records—unlike that for the Quran who were supervised by the Prophet himself—it was no wonder for Jayrajpuri that the earliest compilation of Ahadith, *Muwatta*, was compiled during the second century of Islam while the rest came out as late as the third century.<sup>89</sup> What gave an impetus to this trend was the replacement of ‘truly Islamic central authority’ by the autocratic forces of Umayyads and later Abbasids. In the absence of an agreed upon religious authority, which previously was existing during the reign of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, it was left to individual scholars to find solutions to newly emerging problems in

the light of their personal judgments. These, in turn, gradually came to be derived on the authority of some Hadith.<sup>90</sup> Hence, in order to establish the genuineness of one's religious decree, it became useful, and later imperative, to elevate the status of Hadith to that of the Quran and base judgments and arguments on the basis of the authenticity of a Hadith cited.

More important than a professionally drafted 'Ahl al-Qur'an version' of the history of Hadith, Aslam Jayrajpurī's original contribution lies in coming closer to offering a more convincing solution to the dilemma of filling the 'information vacuum' resulting from the complete disregard for Hadith literature and an absolute severance with past authorities. This he has done by playing upon the existing distinction between Hadith and Sunnat. Instead of discarding the Hadith altogether, Jayrajpurī ascribed to it an important historical value but little religious merit whatsoever. Despite the late origins of the Hadith literature and its abundance of fabricated material, he regarded it as an important source for the history of that period, and as a historical document to which the historians' tool of analysis could be applied to sift the authentic from the fabricated. The information thus secured could be as reliable a source of history as any other work (or even slightly more) of history and Sirat (biography of the Prophet). Jayrajpurī hastened to add that a religiously binding source, however, was required to have a definite source of origin and absolute authenticity in its transmission. It was through this route that Jayrajpurī arrived at expressing his belief in the Quran as the only source worthy of offering authentic religious authority and a text embodying all the canons of faith, such as belief in the unity of Allah; finality of the prophethood; the Day of Judgment and so on. He shared the common point held among all the Ahl al-Qur'an—albeit with varying degrees of interpretations and additional qualifying statements and arguments—that no essential component of the belief system of Islam had been left out from the Quran. As long as one believed in the basics outlined by the Quran and only sceptically questioned the ones elaborated in Ahadith, he did nothing wrong that could be condemned as renunciation of Islam. Similar views were expressed by Sulayman Nadawī—another of Aslam Jayrajpurī's contemporaries—despite the fact that he professed a more traditional and conservative understanding of the role and status of the Prophet. He remarked:

A large component of Hadith literature deals with historical aspects, which is the details, biographies and incidents relating to the Prophet and the

Companions. Obviously these are not disputable items. They are as much part of history as any other historical narrative might be. The only difference is that this particular history is more authentic and credible than any other historical narrative in the world....The other portion deals with the morals and the commandments in which are to be found instructions that are wise and rational. For example [it emphasizes] a dislike for falsehood, praise for justice, virtue of knowledge etc. These are things which find approval not just from the Quran but from the human nature itself. Are these worthy of rejection? ... [But] A belief is based on faith which can be derived from only one thing and that is Revelation and its continuity. Therefore the basis for beliefs are the Quran and the continuous traditions. Obviously the continuous traditions are non-existent or are not more than a handful. In these conditions, Ahadith cannot be described as sources of Belief.<sup>91</sup>

But with regard to practices, Aslam Jayrajpurī did not endorse the rigid Quran-based ritualization insisted upon by Maulwī 'Abdullah and the ahistorical-autonomist shaping of new Islamic modes of worship allowed by Ahmad-ud-Din. This is because he brings into play the concept of *Sunnat-i-Mutwatir* and its distinctness from the Hadith. While Jayrajpurī considered the bulk of the *Ahadith* as singularly reported and hence unfit to meet the criteria, as outlined above, for a source to have binding religious authority—he defined *Sunnat-i-Mutwatir* as a tradition or *Sunnat* of the Prophet that had been in practice by such a large segment of the population over a long period of time that it could not qualify to be untrue.<sup>92</sup> By this account it became possible for him to avoid answering the tricky question, always posed as the first line of argument by the proponents of Hadith to their opponents, of determining the details of *Namaz* from the Quran alone or without the use of Hadith sources. His reliance on *Sunnat-i-Mutwatir* served for him the twin purposes of accepting the present modes of Islamic worships without simultaneously validating it on the basis of *Ahadith*.

However, Aslam Jayrajpurī's argument could not avoid an implicit recognition of the right of the Prophet to determine the mode of worship and other Islamic ritual observances.<sup>93</sup> This, in turn, implied that the Prophet must have done so on the basis of some alternative form of revelation that has not been recorded in the Quran—the *wahi ghayr matlu*. But Jayrajpurī regarded the concept of a revelation outside the pale of the Quranic text as a later day construct and an irrational approach.<sup>94</sup> In rebutting the arguments and revising the meanings of certain Quranic terms that were used by those who believed in the Prophet's authority and in the revelatory status of his words and actions, Aslam Jayrajpurī came

closer to sharing the exegetical findings of Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi and Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari. In verses about the revelation of the Quran where the term *Kitab* is coupled with another term *Hikmah*, Jayrajpuri describes the latter as another word for the Quran and refuses to accept it as an oblique reference to Sunnat or *wahi ghayr matlu*. The verses calling upon the believers to follow the footsteps of the Prophet were understood by him—in consonance with the explanation offered by Ahmad-ud-Din—as an injunction to obey the Prophet in politico-administrative measures as the head of the state.<sup>95</sup> His own addition to this interpretation was an elaboration of the concept of a central Islamic authority. According to him, the Prophet had two duties to perform and roles to accomplish, one concerned his prophetic functions whereby he was to faithfully relay the message of God as His last messenger. In that, there was to be a complete obedience to the Prophet. The second part of his role as the Prophet was to organize a community supported with a politico-administrative set-up in accordance with the guidelines divinely laid down in the Quran. Here the Prophet headed the central Islamic authority and, in this capacity, issued administrative orders; settled judicial disputes; and performed various other tasks relevant to the execution of an efficient administration. It was in his capacity as the head of the Islamic state that he was to be followed by the believers in all sincerity and obedience as commanded by the Quran. Hence the call for obedience was not Prophet-specific rather it was for the institution of Islamic state and the office of its head. As long as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was alive and led the Islamic state, obedience to him equalled obedience to Allah. After his death, the mantle passed on to the caliphs. Since then to the present and all successive ages, Muslims are commanded—in the light of Quranic verses—to be obedient to the workings of a 'true' Islamic state.<sup>96</sup>

Aslam Jayrajpuri's concept of Hadith as a source of history and the justification for the continuation of the present modes of worship on the basis of Sunnat-i-Mutwatir, is an admission of the non-acceptability and unfeasibility of attempted, absolute exclusion of the Prophet's figure from the prevalent practices of the Muslims and abandonment of a viable link to the Muslim past in the form of Hadith. His admission opened the discourse on the status of Hadith and the relative positioning of the Prophet's authority and the Quran to those among the traditionally trained Ulama with serious reservations about Hadith but who did not want to go to the extremes of suggesting revocation of all Hadith or Sunnat-based practices and force a Quranic derivation instead. The two

most important figures who inadvertently benefited from Aslam Jayrajpurī's widening of the discourse, were Ja'far Shah Phulwarwī and Tamanna 'Imadi.

Ja'far Shah Phulwarwī (1902–82), a scion of a learned family of Muslim scholars and mystics from Bihar—resolved the inherent contradiction in Aslam Jayrajpurī's 'theory' of endorsing the prevalent Islamic practices and rituals without recognizing that the Prophet was divinely inspired in instructing them in the first place. For that purpose Ja'far Shah elaborated upon, both, the concept of prophetic roles and revelation.<sup>97</sup> He called for a more clear understanding of differentiation between the Prophet's role as a source of guidance in accordance with the *some* form of *Wahy*, and hence liable to a binding adherence on the part of the believers, and his actions as a human being which do not serve as a precedence whose denunciation leads to excommunication. In this regard he denounced the extremities of ascribing an 'all-divine' or 'all non-divine' status to the actions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the precedents set by him in the form of ritual observances; legal norms; and interpretations of Quranic text. In refutation of the *former type* of approach towards the Prophet, Ja'far Shah said:

Some people argue that a Prophet is a Prophet at all times and so none of his words lay outside his capacity as a Prophet. And then they give the example of a Supreme Court Judge that he remains a Judge all the twenty-four hours of the day and can hold a session anywhere he likes. This is true that a Prophet is at all times a Prophet but not all his conduct is always in the capacity of a Prophet. What a Judge says in the house or market or club does not at all have the same position as that of a decision in the session of the court. To be a Prophet only implies that the designation of Prophet-hood remains with him all the time. It does not at all mean that whatever a Prophet says is in his capacity of the Prophet or that he does not talk of anything that is unrevealed.<sup>98</sup>

At the same time Ja'far Shah enlarged the scope for prophetic authority by challenging the notion that obedience to the Prophet was limited to what he relayed as part of the Quran. For that, Ja'far Shah maintained that the Prophet may not have been guided by the Divine in all his words and actions but it could not be denied that in performance of some of his duties he did receive a parallel stream of guidance which lay strictly outside the pale of the Quran but yet it was as binding for the Muslims as the Quran itself.<sup>99</sup> It is this latter part of the argument that he has added to an otherwise mostly Jayrajpurī version of distinction between prophetic



and non-prophetic roles of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). But while Ja'far Shah accepted the possibility of a parallel source of Divine guidance and made scope for obedience to the Prophet outside of the Quranic message, he, at the same time, served to mitigate the extent of this non-Quranic source and Prophet's authority. This non-Quranic source was described by Ja'far Shah as a form of intuition which can be and has been experienced by numerous mystics, scholars and normal individuals. Intuition was neither exclusively endowed to the Prophet nor did it touch upon a large portion of Ahadith.<sup>100</sup> Hence, the ritual practices established by the Prophet came to acquire a revelatory tinge, while the non-ritual aspects of his precedents ended up as neither part of revelation nor as intuition, but rather an exercise of the Prophet's own judgment as an individual within specific temporal constraints and socio-cultural framework.

If Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi perfected Aslam Jayrajpurī's concept of Sunnat by associating it only tangentially with Divine influence, it was Tamanna 'Imadi (1888–1972), another scholar from a traditional Ulama family of Bihar, who furthered Jayrajpurī's thesis on Hadith as a source of history of Islam and its beliefs. In doing that he was guided by his own erudition in the scholarship of *isnad* criticism—an ability unique to him alone among all the scholars of Ahl al-Qur'an—and recourse to traditional methodology of traditionists in his rejection of some important Ahadith or placing of a stringent criterion for the acceptance of the rest. Like Aslam Jayrajpurī, he did not set out to achieve the goal of absolute rejection of Hadith, but merely attempted to bring it under the influence of the Quran and regarded them as being only selectively useful as a source of guidance in matters of religion.

Accordingly, Tamanna 'Imadi outwardly upholds Hadith literature while adopting an extremely sceptical view of its historicity and subscribing to it a rigorous criterion for scrutiny that effectively reduces its significance and narrows its scope. This can be seen in his rather conspiratorial view of the compilation of Hadith literature. 'Imadi believed that large-scale fabrication of Hadith and popularizing of religious doctrines based on such false reports, was a conspiracy hatched by Iranians incensed by their defeat at the hands of Arabs whom they regarded as culturally and racially inferior. Once they were overrun by Arabs and realized the longevity of this occupation, a strategy was adopted by them to weaken the strength of Arabs by undermining their religion. Hundreds of men were picked from cities and towns of Iran and sent to Arabia where they embraced Islam in the presence of Caliph 'Umar and were deputed with senior



Companions like Abu Huraira for instructions in their new faith. They soon came to regard 'Umar as the major impediment to their mission of driving a wedge in the religious beliefs of Muslims. 'Umar was finally assassinated by an Iranian named Abu Lulu Firoz. As they had firmly established their roots among the Muslims, these hypocrites spread to different parts of the Muslim empire away from Medina where they had a better chance of polluting the minds of the newly converted Muslims. In this way they began to sow seeds of dissent among the Muslims by posing as supporters of Ali whom they projected as the rightful heir of the Prophet. Their efforts bore fruit when a civil war broke out after the assassination of Caliph 'Usman, and as the events unfolded, it finally culminated in the martyrdom of Husayn. But these Persian conspirators realized that civil war alone would not weaken the Muslims so they began their planning to deprive the Muslims of the source of their vital energy, i.e. the Quran. But that was a difficult task since the Quran had already been well preserved in the hearts of its adherents and also in written form. The only alternative was to come up with a parallel source which could dwarf the importance of the Quran in matters of religious practice and belief. In their efforts to promote sympathy for Ali and his progeny, these Iranians had concocted hundreds of Ahadith, finding them favourable to their mission of dividing the Muslims along sectarian lines. Hence from the martyrdom of Husayn onwards, these Iranians planned to spread false Hadith on a mass scale. This trend became so widely popular that even sincere scholars succumbed to it.<sup>101</sup> Yet, at the same time, 'Imadi maintained the view that:

All said, I do not regard the voluminous corpus of Hadith as irrelevant. I regard it as much more acceptable than the substandard research and findings of Encyclopaedia Britannica about Islam. I find these traditions as more trustworthy and historical accounts. This is why I find it necessary that for a better comprehension of religion, a study of this material should be undertaken. But I also believe that these traditions cannot provide an exact history of faith until and unless they are subjected to canons of content-analysis and Quran is accepted as the arbiter to decide on their credibility and authenticity.<sup>102</sup>

A genuine Hadith sorted out by 'Imadi on the basis of some criterion, still, did not have, for him, the authority to modify Quranic regulations or establish a parallel authority of its own. At best it served to substantiate what had already been stated in the Quran.<sup>103</sup> He did acknowledge the Prophet's role in promulgating and specifying religious practices but did not look up to Hadith as a credible referential work for such precedents

set by him. According to 'Imadi, far from providing guidance as to the ways of the Prophet regarding prayer and worship, Hadith had, in effect, served to deprive the Muslims of the Prophet's instructions to his followers regarding prayers, the manner in which they had continued after the Prophet's death and during the times of rule of his Rightly Guided Caliphs and pious Companions.<sup>104</sup> In relying on Sunnat-i-Mutwatir or continuous practice as a more reliable source worthy of imitation, 'Imadi was guided by Aslam Jayrajpurī's and—to some extent—Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's ideas.

What further reinforced the centrality of the Quran in 'Imadi's conceptualization of Islamic sources of guidance was his thorough critique of those Ahadith which undermined the significance of the Quran. Unlike other critics of Hadith whose objections to Hadith were limited to an analysis of its contents, Imadi was erudite enough to thoroughly critique the traditions on the basis of their presumably credible chains of transmission as well. His most revealing 'discovery' in *isnad*-related criticism of Hadith indicted Shahab Zuhri—who is generally considered as the first *Muhaddith* to have started collecting traditions under rubrics from the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar bin 'Abdul 'Aziz—as a Shi'a aiding the 'hypocrites' mission' of maligning the teachings of Islam and causing rifts among its followers.<sup>105</sup> Zuhri's foremost achievement in this project was described by Imadi as a projection of traditions about the Quran which created doubts about the integrity of its text. The reasons for which traditions were fabricated to analyze the historical background of the Quranic text later was to serve the purpose of those who were being criticized for giving due consideration to oral records of the Prophet's sayings. The oral character of Quranic record was then used to cast aspersions on the very nature of the Quranic text as well. No less than 138 contradictions in the present Quranic text were recorded by 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud.<sup>106</sup> This demotes the Quran to the level of other divinely inspired scriptures which are alleged by Muslim critics to have been tampered over a period of time. Hence it was of vital significance for 'Imadi to insist on the compilation of the Quran during the lifetime of Prophet.<sup>107</sup>

After condemning Zuhri as being a Shi'a on the basis of *rijal* criticism, Imadi scrutinized the narrative—which had been reported by Zuhri alone—about the compilation of the Quran. He furnished evidence from selected Hadith to prove that it was the practice of the Prophet to dictate the Quranic verses to his Companions present on the occasion of revelation. The verses were not only memorized by them but also noted

down on thin parchments made up of deerskin. In this manner the whole of the Quran was written and preserved during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the revelation that 'God has completed its religion' was a clear indication that the process of revelation had been completed during his lifetime. According to 'Imadi, this last message must have been revealed at least one-and-a-half years before the Prophet's death and not a few months prior to his demise as is generally believed.<sup>108</sup> There are also traditions to the effect that the Prophet instructed his Companions to recite the whole text of the Quran and he made corrections. In one of the Ahadith, the Prophet is reported to have advised his Companions not to carry the Quran during journeys lest it falls in the hands of the enemies. If the Quran had not been compiled in a book form during the Prophet's lifetime then what was it that they carried while going on their journeys and which the Prophet asked them not to carry with them?<sup>109</sup> The book so compiled was hence kept in a box tied to one of the pillars of the mosques in Medina. Later, as a safety precaution against the conspiracies hatched by the hypocrites, the collection was passed on to Hafza who was the most educated of all the wives of the Prophet.<sup>110</sup> These historical details were used by 'Imadi to deconstruct the traditional account which described the undertaking of the Quran's compilation as a knee-jerk reaction to the killing of scores of memorizers of Quran during the battle of Yamama in AD 632.

The compilation of the Quranic text during the lifetime of Muhammad (PBUH) necessarily precluded the possibility of any abrogated verses from becoming a part of the final version of the Book. This implied not only a theological but also a historical impossibility of abrogation of any ruling of the Quran by Hadith.

Towards the later years of his life, however, Tamanna 'Imadi had drifted more favourably toward Hadith as could be seen in some of his writings against Ghulam Ahmad Parwez and the *Balagh-ul-Quran* published around early 1970s.<sup>111</sup> But even then he never came close to sharing an uncritical belief in the authenticity of Hadith literature like the majority of the religious scholars.

### 5.10. EMERGENCE OF NEW TRENDS IN HADITH CRITICISM AMONG THE ULAMA

The engagement of proponents and deniers of Hadith in theological disputations had gained an increasing momentum during the 1930s with the coming into prominence of such Ahl al-Qur'an figures as Aslam

Jayrajpuri and later Tamanna 'Imadi and Ghulam Ahmad Parwez among many others. Now that Aslam Jayrajpuri had consciously tried to offer a middle-ground between the apparently irreconcilable extremes of a Quran-based rigidity or laxity in matters of ritual observances as stipulated by Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi and Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari respectively, the Ahl al-Qur'an could afford, to at least claim, to be arguing from a discursive space within the larger Islamic tradition. The writings of the Ahl al-Qur'an scholars, each with degrees of variance from one another, became more effective with the use of traditional canons of Hadith criticism and the acceptance of the possibility of the Prophet's authority in establishing religious practices among the Muslims and his reception of non-Quranic sources of revelation. As they increased the chances of the acceptability of their varied doctrines by no longer insisting on the scrapping of every non-Quranic aspect of religion and accepting a more active role for the Prophet in the shaping up of religious edicts and practices, the challenge for their rival Ulama was two-pronged: they had to make efforts to stem the tide of rising scepticism among various sections of Muslim intelligentsia and force a re-evaluation of many of their own stated views on Hadith.

In meeting the latter part of this challenge, most of the Ulama adopted the 'strategy' of carrying on their reverence for Hadith while in principle agreeing to the possibility of revision of Hadith literature. They wanted to give the impression that a degree of scepticism regarding Hadith had been in existence in the days of the Prophet himself, and this was the reason why utmost care was taken by the Companions and those generations of scholars who followed them to make sure that anything reported and established among the Muslims as a precedent or practice on the behalf of the Prophet was absolutely authenticated. The scrutiny was carried out on the basis of *isnad* as well as *darayat* and hence it would be incorrect to assert, as most Ahl al-Qur'an critics of Hadith were claiming, that there remains a large scope for the scrutiny of Hadith on the basis of *darayat*. While in principle it was still possible to doubt the authenticity of a particular Hadith by someone as learned as the classical traditionists of yesteryears, for all practical purposes such an endeavour was considered undesirable for the fear of opening up unnecessary debates among the Muslims on petty issues. But the question of the Prophet's authority to offer the only interpretation of the Quran and give practical shape to what has been abstractly touched upon in the Quran was, for the Ulama, an article of faith and a settled question for which they did not allow any space even for a theoretical reconsideration. The study of

the emergence of new trends among the Ulama had to focus on what was being demanded by the Ahl-al-Qur'an for the re-evaluation of Hadith literature and the extent to which the Ulama went in adopting it as the means of countering the position taken by their rivals.

A look at the changes in the stance of some conservative Ulama with regard to Hadith reveal that among the more established Muslim 'sects' of Ahl-i-Hadith, Deoband and Bareilwi, there was no collective or institutional reckoning of the needs for a revision. Even at an individual level no significant scholar seems to have been touched by the idea for a questioning of Hadith literature. Maulana 'Ubayd Ullah Sindhi, a notable scholar of Deoband known less for his religious writings and more for abortive attempts at organizing an anti-British force from Afghanistan during the First World War, was an exception in this regard. He expressed his concerns about the contents of *Bukhari* and declared it unsuitable literature for any newly converted European Muslim. In imitation of Shah Wali Ullah, 'Ubayd Ullah Sindhi, too, preferred *Muwatta'* over *Sahih Bukhari*.<sup>112</sup> Other than him, those who came to suggest additions to the traditional methodologies regarding Hadith and rules pertaining to derivation of religious edicts from it, did not avowedly express affiliation with any particular sect and could loosely be described as Hanafis although in due course of time their followers came to acquire epithets after their ideologues or the organizations that they had set up.

The most prominent example of a conservative, staunchly anti-Ahl al-Qur'an scholar advocating a refreshing look at the corpus of Hadith literature in the light of revised criteria for scrutiny is that of Abul 'Ala Maududi—the founder of the Jama'at-i-Islami. Maududi found fault with the extreme positions taken by both the proponents and deniers of Hadith. He attempted to establish a middle-ground (*maslak-i-aytadal*) between the extremities of complete disregard or trust in the absolute fabrication or authenticity of Ahadith. According to him the proponents of Hadith exaggerated the services and the 'virtues' of the traditionists—who, despite all their invaluable contributions in the field of preservation and criticism of Hadith, were still humans—to the extent of claiming that the status of every single Hadith in terms of its authenticity and suitability as a binding source of religious guidance had accurately been determined by them to which no further additions were required. While Maududi too extolled the services rendered by the traditionists, he did not rule out the possibility of lapses in their works.<sup>113</sup> Unlike his other contemporaries and like-minded scholars, he did not simply accept the theoretical possibility of re-scrutiny of Hadith collections but also pointed out some



of their lacunae and suggested ways by which they could be plugged. He favoured the idea of relying more on the principle of *darayat* as a tool for ascertaining the validity of Hadith by scholars well-versed in all branches of Islamic knowledge system, but most importantly in Hadith and Fiqh. He thought that such a scholar would not only be conversant with the requirements for an authentic relaying of a tradition but would also be able to apply his specialized knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence to determine the way in which the content of a Hadith could be understood and derive from it possible doctrinal injunctions, legal principles and ritual details. In this regard the figure of Abu Hanifa as a traditionist-jurisprudent served for him—as it did for Shibli Nu'mani—the ideal prototype.

As already discussed, Abu Hanifa is reported to have relied on less reliable traditions in the presence of more authentic ones because he was able to assess the merits of the material available to him in the capacities of both a jurist and a traditionist.<sup>114</sup> Maududi himself cited some Ahadith<sup>115</sup> which had been recorded in authentic Hadith collections but which were found by him to be absolute fabrications or, at least, misunderstood because of traditionist's failure to apply *darayat*-jurisprudential methods of scrutiny. What incensed the proponents of Hadith most was his suggestion that a scholar who had acquired an ability to 'read the mind of the Prophet' (*Mizaj Shanas-i-Rusul*) should have an extensive authority in deciding upon the merit of such Ahadith on the basis of *darayat*. He likened the *Mizaj Shanas-i-Rusul* to an experienced jeweller who could differentiate between a jewel and the stone. He had to be a scholar who

has deeply studied most of Hadith literature to develop an insight for evaluating Ahadith. With continuous study and expertise, a person can acquire an ability to be a *Mizaj Shanas-i-Rusul* as the true spirit of Islam gets entrenched in his heart and intellect. And then, with a glance, he can make out whether a particular Hadith is in fact the statement of the Prophet or not? Or could he have acted in a particular way or not?<sup>116</sup>

Although, conceptually, Maududi opened up Hadith literature to criticism on an apparently vaguely conceived idea but in his own writings he appeared to be very selective in dismissing traditions on these counts. Except for a very few traditions, Maududi did not dispute the status and contents of the rest of *Sahih Bukhari*.<sup>117</sup> Also, he tried to offer explanations for certain 'objectionable' traditions—instead of discarding them on *Darayat* basis—which were taken by many among modern-day Muslims



as a source of embarrassment and used by the deniers of Hadith for the projection of their doctrines. One such tradition that he defended was about Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) wife 'A'isha demonstrating the way the Prophet took his bath. Maududi came to the defence of this tradition by arguing that the witnesses of this act were no strangers to 'A'isha and were her close blood relations (*mehram*). Secondly, a screen was put between her and the observers. The objection that the screen must have been a latticed one to allow the observer to note the details was set aside by Maududi on the ground that the purpose of 'A'isha was to show whether a bath could be taken by using a limited amount of water or not.<sup>118</sup> In the same vein he defended the disclosure of private details of the Prophet's life on the ground that it had to be done for the benefit and guidance of Muslim women.

In Maududi's floating of the idea for the review of Hadith literature, it can be seen that his prescribed principles for Hadith criticism do not extend beyond an inclination for application of *darayat* principles by a scholar with expertise in matters of Hadith and Jurisprudence. He does not have objections to the Isnad-based criteria for Hadith criticism and toes a strictly traditional line of argument in its defence against the revisionist notions offered by the Ahl al-Qur'an. This is clearly seen in his acceptance of single reports as a valid source for religious beliefs and practices.<sup>119</sup> It tacitly implies that he does not yield to arguments favouring the Quran as the only source of religious guidance qualified to enjoin fundamental beliefs of Islam simply because it alone has been preserved in an unadulterated form and relayed with continuously linked, and multiple chains of transmission. For him a single report can be as much a source of some essential component of faith as a widely reported one. By this logic he rebutted the argument of the likes of Aslam Jayrajpurī who justified the prevalent modes of religious practices on the basis of Sunnat-i-Mutwatir. One of Maududi's reasons for giving the Ahadith—mostly single reports—an importance similar, if not greater, to that of Sunnat-i-Mutwatir in the moulding of Muslim practices was to stress a point on these practices as being textually supported unlike that of other religions.<sup>120</sup>

The second important argument—regarding the categorization of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) actions as 'Prophetic' and 'Human'—employed by Aslam Jayrajpurī to gain legitimacy for Ahl al-Qur'an's dogmatic position on the role and duties of the Prophet, was also taken up by Maududi. He did not admit to the possibility of demarcating a line between Muhammad bin 'Abdullah and Muhammad the Prophet of Allah

for that distinction had not been made in the Quran. Thus all the Prophet's words and actions were to be taken as divinely guided and sanctioned, and an extension of his Prophetic mission.<sup>121</sup> Even in his personal choices for food and clothing, the Prophet's preferences were in accordance with the dictates of Shari'at and hence served as precedents for the Muslims when it came to making decisions in these matters. In this case—and other such instances where believers were enjoined upon by the Prophet himself to exercise their own judgment—even Maududi had to admit that the distinction between the Muhammad (PBUH) the Prophet and the man might appear blurred. But, for Maududi, this blurring of roles did not lead to an inference that certain aspects of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) words and actions were personal—and hence non-binding—while the rest were religiously binding. It was because the option to exercise one's judgment, in itself, had been granted by the Shari'at through the Prophet. So the availing of that option, which in any case would be within the precincts of other specifications generally laid out by the Shari'at, the believer would still be following the command of the Prophet.<sup>122</sup> Thus every action, whether in accord with one's own judgment or the footsteps of the Prophet, can be traced back to the authority designated to Muhammad (PBUH) as being the Prophet of Allah and the sole interpreter of His faith. This authority was neither temporally constrained nor limited to the settlement of politico-administrative affairs alone.

Among those espousing traditional understanding of Islam, Hamid-ud-Din Farahi—an accomplished scholar of Arabic language and literature—and his disciple Amin Ahsan Islahi came closer to sharing Aslam Jayrapuri's idea of sanctifying the prevalent ritual observances on the basis of Sunnat instead of Hadith.

In his criteria for accepting Ahadith, Farahi accepted the notion of accepting only those traditions which did not contradict the basic tenets and clear expositions of the Quran.<sup>123</sup> For the exegesis of Quran, which was his main field of scholarly excellence, Farahi again played down the importance of Hadith by attempting to interpret the Quran from the Quranic text itself. Where extra-Quranic references were required for the interpretation of the Quran, he—and later his disciple—clearly favoured sources other than Hadith. Islahi gave most consideration to the pre-Islamic Arabic literature as the source to acquire information about the socio-political context of the age of Quranic revelation and develop an understanding of the language and literary techniques of that period. His critics found his preference unacceptable because, for them, the historical

merit of the pre-Islamic Arabic literature (mostly poetry) did, in no way, come close to the authenticity of Hadith literature. Next in Islahi's principles of exegesis was an emphasis on the composition of the Quran and its internal symmetrical coherence to interpret the Quran from its own text.<sup>124</sup> This was followed by Sunnat-i-Mutwatir as a preferred source for the interpretation of Quran. Hence, Hadith, for Islahi, was of marginal significance in the exegesis of the Quran and came into consideration after the above mentioned sources had been fully put to use. This insignificance of Hadith for Islahi is also corroborated by the fact that in his *Tafsir* spanning over 4870 pages and 9 volumes, only 40 Ahadith have been quoted.<sup>125</sup>

Islahi also had a different set of preferences when it came to establishing the essentials of faith and practices. He falls in line with the thought of those Ulama who have an unswerving belief in the authority of the Prophet to establish the religion in all its different spheres in accordance with the direct or direct Divine guidance. While he believed that the Prophet was divinely guided in giving practical shape to ritual observances of Namaz and Hajj, he accepted them as valid—unlike Maududi—not because of textual support from Hadith but on the basis of Sunnat-i-Mutwatir.<sup>126</sup> It implied that one was compelled to observe the prevalent ritual observances not because some reliable narrators had recorded the prescribed details in an authentic book of tradition but because they had been in continuous practice, in a more or less mutually agreed upon mode, for ages. In matters of beliefs too, Islahi limited the role of Hadith by subjecting it more strictly to the authority of the Quran. Only those Ahadith which had been in continuous practice were regarded by him as definite as Quran. For the single reports—which comprised the bulk of Hadith literature and whose status was the main dispute between Ahl al-Qur'an scholars like Tamanna 'Imadi and the proponents of Hadith—he suggested a criterion based on *isnad*, *darayat* and compatibility with the Quran.<sup>127</sup> As a member of the Jama'at-i-Islami for some years, Islahi shared Maududi's *Mizaj Shanas-i-Rusul* theory insofar as he found it permissible to discard a Hadith if found to be distasteful by men of letters. He believed that the scholars of yesteryears had developed such an insight and it should not come as a surprise if any other individual, with his in-depth study and divine grace, was able to attain similar capabilities.<sup>128</sup>

Among the proponents of Hadith, Amin Ahsan Islahi was probably the only scholar with 'conservative' credentials who shared 'Imadi's *type* of Ahl al-Qur'an thinking.<sup>129</sup> He believed in the divine impeccability of the Prophet and his authority to determine the beliefs and practices of

the religion. But he neither accepted Hadith as an undisputed vehicle or authoritative source of this tradition nor did he extend unqualified recognition to the compiled Hadith works as devoid of gross errors or serious lapses. His preference was to locate the part of this tradition—which is the repository of essential belief system of Islam—from the Quran by various non-Hadith sources and practices from Sunnat-i-Mutwatir. In both cases Hadith mostly served as an appendage to some other more reliable source and not as the main argumentative authority or the only representative of Prophet's tradition. Thus, in this way, the principle of authenticity for the derivation of beliefs and practices could be established, instead of preference for any particular source, but not at the expense of the Prophet's divine status or that of his words and actions.

### 5.11. UMMAT-I-MUSLIMA UP TO 1952

Ummat-i-Muslima, with its journal *Balagh* and later *Al-Bayan*,<sup>130</sup> continued to make its presence felt in Amritsar and beyond, even after the death of its patron-ideologue Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari in 1936. One of the important tasks for the Ummat-i-Muslima was to ensure the completion of Quranic commentary started by Ahmad-ud-Din a decade ago on the insistence of his followers and which was periodically being published in *Balagh*. It is ironical that a large component of Ahmad-ud-Din's Tafsir was published posthumously and was based on the oral record of his weekly Quranic addresses at Ummat-i-Muslima's mosque though he, all his life, remained sceptical of the Hadith literature as it was not reliably and formally recorded and written down during the Prophet's lifetime.<sup>131</sup> Ahmad-ud-Din's death did not condemn Ummat-i-Muslima to oblivion as was the case with their counterparts in Lahore. On the contrary, they achieved a moderate degree of organizational success. Annual gatherings of like-minded scholars were held on regular basis, special issues of *Balagh* and *Al-Bayan* were taken out on specified themes, and a few buildings were built to establish the organization on a sounder basis. By 1942 construction of a mosque was completed. It was spacious enough to be used for religious and other congregations.<sup>132</sup> A library adjacent to the mosque was stocked with books and research material to facilitate research on themes relating to the ideology of Ummat-i-Muslima. The Ummat-i-Muslima even managed to secure enough funds to advertise and pay for a 'trained preacher' who could reach out to people and familiarize them with Ummat-i-Muslima's version of Islam.

Sana'ullah Amritsari continued his tirades against Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari and his followers in Ummat-i-Muslima. Even though no direct polemic took place between Sana'ullah and Ahmad-ud-Din after 1929, the former repeatedly sought to expose the hollowness of latter's religious doctrine or those followed by his adherents. After Ahmad-ud-Din's death the task to respond to criticism thrown their way by Sana'ulah was primarily left to Muhammad Husayn 'Arshi Amritsari. Sana'ullah questioned Ummat-i-Muslima about their doctrines relating to various acts whose permissibility or impermissibility was to be found in Hadith alone.<sup>133</sup> This, along with other queries sent by the sympathizers and opponents of the movement alike, was dealt with by 'Arshi for a brief period of time on the basis of Quran-only approach. He did not find it necessary to look for verses that had a direct bearing to the question asked but only pointed to general themes of Quranic text and tone of its wordings on a related issue to suggest an open-ended interpretation to the questioner for him to draw his own conclusion. For instance, he found it abundantly clear from the unwavering course of Quranic teachings that luxurious items like silk and gold were to be avoided for they stood in the way of the pious and virtuous spirit that the Quran intended to inculcate among the Muslims.<sup>134</sup> But for many aspects of religion, wholly unrelated to the Quran, 'Arshi and Ummat-i-Muslima simply repeated Ahmad-ud-Din's doctrine of making use of Hadith wherever necessary, in the same vein as the Prophet would borrow from other religious groups inhabiting Arabia without considering it Divine in origin at all.<sup>135</sup>

Other than the publication of a journal, Ummat-i-Muslima brought out a few tracts written by anonymous 'graduates' and 'researchers'. The focus of these works was to make a sharp, and often satirical, critique of Hadith literature without any corresponding emphasis on the Quran as the only text to be abided. Writing under the pseudonym *Haqq Go* (the truthful), the Ummat-i-Muslima affiliated author evoked considerable controversy by systematically enumerating the historical flaws and objectionable content to be found in Hadith literature. Since it was by a 'college-educated' researcher and not by a trained religious scholar, the style of reasoning and systemization of arguments was much in conformity with Western style of historiography and could appeal to the tastes of those with a similar academic background. It did not dabble much with issues of theology and targeted the Hadith in a focused and direct manner. The simplicity and straightforwardness of this approach, as well as the sensitivity of the issues regarding the contents of Hadith and life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) touched upon in the book, was the reason



why such stalwarts as Sayyid Abul 'Ala Maududi felt it necessary to respond to it. Maududi was more concerned with devising a counter-framework by which the objections raised by *Haqq Go*—and that of other deniers of Hadith among 'college graduates' whose numbers were in ascendance during the 1930s—could be addressed. Instead of giving a rationale for every Hadith criticized by *Haqq Go*, Maududi simply stated that Hadith was not the only material used by opponents to defame Islam. Similar 'objectionable' teachings were found by the opponents in the Holy Quran and it was for this reason that a multitude of people, instead of being touched by its message, used it as a source to criticize Islam and its teachings.<sup>136</sup> But for more direct objections raised by *Haqq Go* against specific Ahadith, Habib-ur-Rahman Meo's *Nusrat-ul-Hadith* attempted at responding to them. The most interesting aspect of this debate between the two was the issue of the Prophet's marriage to nine-year-old 'A'isha.<sup>137</sup> For Habib-ur-Rahman to prove the authenticity of Hadith found in *Bukhari*, it was necessary to justify the marriage at the reported age of nine. He did that by quoting Quranic verses to the effect that the prerequisite for any marriage was puberty. No specific age is mentioned in the Quran since puberty is triggered in different individuals at a different age with climatic conditions and environment playing their roles as well. In case of 'A'isha it could be presumed that she had attained puberty by the age of nine and for this reason she was married off to the Prophet. *Haqq Go's* criticism of this episode was based on 'historical evidence' about later events in 'A'isha's life. 'A'isha had led the Battle of Camel against the ruling Caliph Ali, much in violation of Quran's injunction to the effect that the wives of the Prophet should remain in their homes till they reach old age. If 'A'isha was nine at the time of her marriage then she should have been forty five by the time this took place which was in AH 36. For *Haqq Go*, 'A'isha ought to have been older than nine at the time of marriage for not violating the Quranic injunction by the time of the Battle of Camel. Here, Habib-ur-Rahman detected a contradiction in *Haqq Go's* approach who earlier had stated that the Prophet married an 'old widow' Khadija aged between 40/45.<sup>138</sup>

*Haqq Go's* treatise was indicative of a growing trend among members of Ummat-i-Muslima of explicit criticism of *Bukhari* for its 'contents more shameful than those of *Kukshastra*.'<sup>139</sup> It was at that time in the late 1930s that Ghulam Jilani Barq (1901–85)<sup>140</sup> began to contribute regular articles for *Al-Bayan*. His first book *Do Qur'an* was episodically published in the journal before it was brought out as a book as one of Ummat-i-Muslima publications. Barq had spent many years as an 'apostate' after reading



Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal's *Tehzib-ul-Islam* and other anti-Islamic literature by Swami Dayanand and Lekh Ram before he came under the influence of 'Allama Mashriqi's *Tazkira* in 1928.<sup>141</sup> This is amply demonstrated in *Do Qur'an* where he—in line with Mashriqi's approach—draws upon 'scientific' evidence to emphasize Quran's consistency with the 'Book of Nature' even at a microcosmic level of life and supports pursuit of material gains for worldly achievements as an enjoinder by God. In continuation of his affiliation with Ummat-i-Muslima, *Do Islam* came out in 1949 in which he made an incisive criticism of Hadith literature. He did more than any scholar of similar ideas on Hadith to explicitly bring forth controversial details about the Prophet's marital life. In fact his book was the first—and probably the only—work in Urdu by a Muslim scholar which listed all reports about the intimate details of the personal life of the Prophet and commented upon them, at times in a rather irreverent, satirical and humorous manner.<sup>142</sup> In his views on the authority of the Prophet also, he expressed views that unsparingly described the Prophet as a reporter whose task was only to bring news or mail without there being a possibility of him assuming a position of authority.<sup>143</sup>

With political upheavals bringing about considerable changes in colonial South Asia, the question about the Prophet's marital life was briefly superseded by that of defining his role in the functioning of a state. The independence of Pakistan in 1947 brought in its wake much distress, and at the same time, opened new windows of opportunity for members of Ummat-i-Muslima. The organization had to migrate from Amritsar leaving behind its mosque, madrasa, library, and bank deposits—assets so assiduously acquired over a period of time. Lahore became the new headquarters of the organization where it was allotted a building in compensation for the one lost in Amritsar.<sup>144</sup> *Al-Bayan* resumed publication in 1949 with a declaration issued in the name of Qamar Amritsari. It was later published by Khwaja 'Ibad Ullah Akhtar with contributions made by Muhammad Husayn 'Arshi and Khwaja Sakha Ullah—son of Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari—along with other previous members of the organization. During its brief tenure which lasted till 1952, *Al-Bayan* contributed to the ongoing discussions about the future constitution and political system of the nascent Islamic state. Like in its dogmatic approach where authority of the past and precedents set by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) or Caliphs in religious affairs mattered little, Ummat-i-Muslima extended a similar *carte blanche* to authorities in power for affairs pertaining to state and governance.

With the cessation of *Al-Bayan's* publication, Ummat-i-Muslimah's written contributions to the disputations on the status of Hadith and the authority of the Prophet came to a halt. What remained of Ummat-i-Muslimah was its centre in Lahore, Dar-ul-Qur'an, where weekly lectures were held on various aspects of the Quran. This arrangement continued till recently before the possession of the building was illegally wrested from the surviving members of Ummat-i-Muslimah by a Jihadi outfit.<sup>145</sup>

## 5.12. CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to address some of the theoretical presumptions outlined in the 'Introduction' of this study. First, the diversity of opinion on the part of various Ahl al-Qur'an scholars has been analyzed to show that the Ahl al-Qur'an movements cannot be subsumed under any narrow definition, nor a unified or internally homogenous body of religious doctrines can be ascribed to them. Second, it has shown how Ahl al-Qur'an's deconstruction of the Isnad paradigm led to the opening up of Islamic religious traditions for revision, reform and contestation. An attempt has also been made to gauge the impact of the Ahl al-Qur'an movements. It has been shown to be academically significant but not out-rightly popular at the mass level. Its popularity among the college-educated Muslims has been highlighted by referring to the writings of a 'Muslim graduate'. Also, the fact that Ahl al-Qur'an ideas forced at least partial questioning of the doctrine of Hadith among some of the Ulama proves that by the 1930s the Ahl al-Qur'an ideas had come to occupy an important part of the religious polemics among various Muslim groups.

## NOTES

1. Ian Talbot, 'Violence, Migration and Resettlement: the Case of Amritsar', in Ian Talbot and Shinder Thandi, eds. *People on the Move: Punjabi Colonial, and Post-Colonial Migration* (Karachi, 2004), 79. Some of the important and well-known Muslim academics and writers from Amritsar are Sa'adat Hasan Manto, Hakim Firoz-ud-Din Tughra'i, Sayf-ud-Din Sayf, A. Hamid and Sufi Tabbassum. There did exist some degree of intellectual freedom of religion as borne out by the fact that an atheist's club comprising of former Muslims and Hindus like 'Abdul Razzaq Khaki and Mastar Mast Ram, held regular discussions with scholars of other faiths on topics dealing with existence and unity of God.
2. For most comprehensive account of Muslim organizations in Punjab, cf. Ahmad Sa'id, *Musalmanan-i-Panjab ki Samaji aur Falahi Anjumanayn: Ek Tajziyati Mutal'a* (Lahore, 2004).
3. For more details, cf. Ahmad Sa'id, *Anjuman Islamiyya Amritsar 1873-1947: Ta'limi wa Siyasi Khidmat* (Lahore, 1986).

4. Ahmad Sa'id, *Musalmanan-i-Panjab*, 25.
5. These include Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam (1888), Anjuman-i Islah-i-Tammaddun (1909), Anjuman Taraqqi-i Ta'lim Musalmanan-i-Hind, (1910), Anjuman Isha'at-i-Islam (1927), Anjuman Ittehad-ul-Khawatin (1928), Anjuman Naujawan-i Islam (1929), and so on. For details, cf. Ahmad Sa'id, *Musalmanan-i-Panjab*.
6. Ghulam Mustafa Qasmi (d. 1933) was himself a Hanafi and some of his writings were published in Bareilly journals, but he sent his son Baha'ul-Haq Qasmi (d. 1987) to Deoband to train him as a religious scholar. For further details and family history of Amritsar based Deobandi scholars, Cf. Baha'ul-Haq Qasmi, *Tazkira-i-Aslaf* (Lahore, 1987). Such dogmatic flexibility was not very uncommon. Mufti Muhammad Hasan studied under the Ghaznawi family of Ahl-i-Hadith scholars. Similarly, Sana'ullah Amritsari of Ahl-i-Hadith went to Deoband to receive instruction in Hadith from Mehmud-ul-Hasan.
7. *Jahan-i-Raza* (Lahore) 9, 90 (2000), Hakim Muhammad Musa Amritsari par Nambiar, 237.
8. Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti, *Miyan Fazl-i-Haq aur un ki Khidmat* (Lahore, 1997), 20.
9. For a detailed account of Ahl-i-Hadith in Punjab and Sana'ullah Amritsari's life and ideas, cf. Martin Riexinger, *Sana'ullah Amritsari (1868-1948) und die Ahl-i-Hadith im Punjab unter Britischer Herrschaft* (Würzburg, 2004).
10. It was claimed by the followers of Ahmad-ud-Din that it was he who prevailed upon Maulwi Abdullah to fully discard Hadith literature including *Bukhari* which was regarded by the latter as possible sources of authority along with Quran. *Balagh* (Amritsar) 13, 9 (September 1936), Sirat Ahmad-ud-Din, 22.
11. That he had a free-thinking aptitude and an independent mindset from the very beginning, is believed by his followers to be an important aspect of his thought pattern as 'proved' by an incident from his childhood when he insisted on solving a mathematical problem correctly even when nine of his other class fellows and, more significantly, the inspection officer on tour of government school wrongly insisted otherwise. *Ibid.*, 8.
12. He received religious training from Ghulam Muhayy-uddin Bhagwi and Ahmad Din Bhagvi of Bhera in Punjab. Dr 'Abdul Ra'uf Zafar, *'Ulum-ul-Hadith* (Lahore, 2006), 812.
13. After his death, Ghulam-ul-Ali's successors, wary of a backlash from more conservative Ulama, did not allow the publication of their father's unpublished essays and manuscripts. *Balagh*, Sirat Ahmad-ud-Din, 10. This account of Ghulam-ul-Ali Qusuri's life and religious ideas is regarded as a fabrication by the Ahl-i-Hadith. *Ahl-i-Hadith* (Amritsar), 2 October 1936, 4-5.
14. Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari, *Burhan-ul-Qur'an*, ed. Ibn-i-Qur'an Sindhi (Karachi, 1983), 21.
15. *Ibid.*, 31-2.
16. *Balagh*, Sirat Ahmad-ud-Din, 19-20.
17. Sindhi ed., 34. Aslam Jayrajputi—son of a famous Ahl-i-Hadith scholar Salamat Ullah Jayrajputi—translated parts of Ahmad-ud-Din's work on inheritance law of Islam in Arabic to introduce it to a wider audience. More details about Aslam Jayrajputi will follow in this and the later chapters.
18. *Balagh*, Sirat Ahmad-ud-Din, 15.
19. Quran, verses, 16:72 and 11:71.
20. *Al-Bayan* (Amritsar) 3, 4-5 (June-July 1941): 78-9.
21. *Ibid.*, 107.

22. Little else is known about his public activities all these years except that he engaged in discussions with some non-Muslims on different occasions on a variety of issues, including a debate on the merits and demerits of flesh eating. The debate was held under the aegis of Aryan Debating Club in Amritsar in 1904. In order to provide the Muslims with a platform for free religious discussions and counter the propaganda of rivals, Ahmad-ud-Din helped establish an Islamic Debating Club in Amritsar. He appeared to have interests in the lively religious debates of the city. He is said to have written against the atheistic propaganda of a local group, already referred to, in 1900. *Balagh*, Sirat Ahmad-ud-Din, 25. Due to his deep interest in acquiring knowledge of different religions, he even attended discussions organized in private sittings by Baha'i preachers from Iran who had arrived in Amritsar in 1907. Cf. *Secret Punjab Police Abstracts of Intelligence*, Vol. XXIX No. 12, 2 November 1907, 3025.
23. These letters were later published in a book titled *Burhan-ul-Qur'an* (Amritsar, n.d.) to help publicize Ahmad-ud-Din's views on Hadith and 'hollowness' of his critic's arguments in defence of it.
24. *Ibid.*, 2.
25. *Ibid.*, 8.
26. *Ibid.*, 149.
27. Muhammad Husayn Arshi later assumed a respectable status as a scholar of Iqbal studies. Arshi spent a lot of time in the company of Ahmad-ud-Din and was greatly inspired by his views on the Quran and Hadith. However, later in his life, 'Arshi seemed to have developed a respect for Hadith literature. For details about 'Arshi's life, cf. *Fayz-ul-Islam* (Rawalpindi) 37, 11–12 (November–December 1985), 'Arshi Nambar; Muhammad Zafar-ul-Haq Chishti, 'Muhammad Husayn 'Arshi aur unki 'Ilmi aur Adabi Khidmat', MPhil Thesis, Allama Iqbal Open University, (Islamabad, 2001).
28. Sana'ullah Amritsari ridiculed Ummat-i-Muslima with the epithet of Ummat-i-Musaylma—a reference to Musaylma who made a false claim to prophethood during the lifetime of Muhammad (ﷺ) and was defeated to death by the first Muslim Caliph Abu Bakr. *Ahl-i-Hadith*, 2 October 1936, 4.
29. But *Balagh* strongly condemned the practice of calling Ahl al-Qur'an followers as Chakralawis as it was disallowed by the Holy Quran to call one's opponents with insulting names. *Balagh* 5, 8 (November 1928): 4.
30. *Balagh* 8, 3–5, (June–July 1931): 31–2. A more thorough enumeration of Ummat-i-Muslima doctrines and its differences with the Ahl al-Qur'an Lahore, is found in an article published in *Al-Bayan* in 1946. It says: 'We, unlike Ahl al-Qur'an, have no hard feelings for Hadith. Whatever in Ahadith that is rational, fair, in conformity with Quran and worthy of the status of the Prophet, will surely be accepted by us. But blind imitation is not our way nor are we willing to accept it as 'perfectly reliable' as Divine revelation is. We do not believe that the established form of prayer and its arrangement is Divine but find it reasonable to a great extent and follow it. Unlike Ahl al-Qur'an, we do not believe in creating useless mischief and sectarianism by creating a form of Namaz different from that of the rest.' *Al-Bayan* (Amritsar) 6, 7 (July 1946): 28.
31. His ideas about Islamic Universalism and other themes unfolded gradually from 1924 onwards in the form of articles published in *Balagh* and later exegetical essays that appeared in the same journal.
32. Amritsari, Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din, 'Tamhid' in *Tafsir Bayan li-l-nas*, Lahore, Repr. 1999, I, 4.
33. *Ibid.*, 73.

34. Ibid., 78.
35. Amritsari, *Tafsir*, IV, 292.
36. *Tafsir*, I, 144.
37. *Balagh*, 6, 8–9 (November–December 1929), Zamima: 1.
38. Ibid., 5.
39. This argument boomeranged in his face during a later discussion with Barelwi. Writing in *Al-Faṣḥ* in 1937, a Barelwi scholar held the view that if Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) can be accepted as having the actual commanding authority derived from Allah, then by the extension of same logic he be considered as sharing His possessions and creations—a view turned down by their Ahl-i-Hadith rival as too polytheistic and resembling the practice of Christians in their depictions of Jesus. Cited in Sindhi (ed.), *Burhan-ul-Qur'an*, 106–9.
40. *Balagh*, 6, 8–9 (November–December 1929), Zamima: 17.
41. Ibid., 28. In his algebraic presentation of the arguments of Sana'ullah Amritsari and Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari, Ghazi Mahmud Dharampal sided with the latter as shown by the following figure drawn by him. (God = Actual Commanding Authority) and (Prophet = Actual Commanding Authority with the sanction of God = God with the sanction of God). Hence Prophet = God with the sanction of God. *Balagh*, 7, 1, April 1930: 2.
42. Amritsari, Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din. *Rayhan-ul-Qur'an*, Amritsar, n.d., 35.
43. *Tafsir*, I, 185.
44. One aspect of Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) 'special status' could not be avoided, even, by Ahmad-ud-Din. That Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was the seal of prophets was acknowledged by him not so much as an extraordinary trait of his prophetic mission but as a counter argument to preclude the possibility of any scripture other than the Quran being revealed by God to arbitrate among followers of different religions as a yardstick for truth and falsehood. Such a Book could not have been revealed earlier since human mind was still passing through stages of evolution and nor was it possible to ensure faithful recording of the text in those times. Similarly, other religious texts like Vedas, fail to qualify for this role since theirs is a dead language. The ultimate course for the guidance of humankind could only be sent at a time when religious differences had reached their highest stage and need for resolution of such disputes was imminently required. According to Ahmad-ud-Din, now that there exists a sacred Book like the Quran which speaks in a rational manner, resolves disputes, invites people of different faith to agree on mutually acceptable principles—new revealed sources are neither required nor can they replace or abrogate the Quran. *Tafsir*, V, 329–32.
45. *Tafsir*, VI, 349.
46. *Tafsir*, VII, 277. This is a wholly new interpretation of this Surah which has always been understood as prophesising a destructive and painful end to the efforts made and conspiracies hatched against Islam by the Prophet's uncle Abu Lahab and his wife.
47. 'Tambid', 52–3.
48. *Al-Bayan* (Lahore) 2, 11 (July 1951): 38, 41.
49. *Tafsir*, II, 250–3. Ahmad-ud-Din offers similarly different interpretations of supernatural events ascribed to other Biblical prophets like Noah, Jonah, and Jesus.
50. *Tafsir*, VI, 42.
51. However, the prophets were to be considered as immutable in only those actions in which they acted with piety and virtue. For this reason, one needed not be following



- Moses' example of slapping the Angel of death or Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) rebuking a poor blind man. *Tafsir*, IV, 13.
52. *Tafsir*, I, 187. What could serve as a better example for the ordinariness of prophetic personage than the fact that he had to run for his life in battle against the Meccans and—as Ahmad-ud-Din states in a rather crude and blunt way—could not save the life of even his own sons. *Tafsir*, VII, 275.
  53. *Tafsir*, I, 44. As *Balagh* commented, prophets like Abraham and Joseph are reported not to have understood the revelatory information in their dreams and expressed reservations about it. This showed that they were prone to misunderstand the revelation like any other ordinary man. *Balagh* 5, 8 (November 1928): 5.
  54. *Tafsir*, VII, 77.
  55. *Tafsir*, I, 513.
  56. In his criticism of the Ahl-i-Hadith dogma he laid down that if the Quran was not considered to be sufficient in details for matters of religious beliefs and practices then it tantamounts to projecting the Quran as a book that simply served as an advertisement to tell the people to look up Hadith books for resolution of their problems. According to him, it was illogical to maintain that an advertisement could be more important than the books it referred and recommended to its readers. *Tafsir*, III, 186.
  57. *Al-Bayan* (Amritsar) 12, 5 (May 1940): 15. He further raised the objections that in case Hadith had a similar revelatory status then why was the Prophet reported to have decreed his followers to delete that material? This implied that Companions, under the command of the Prophet, deleted portions of revelation meant to serve as a source of guidance for Muslims. *Tafsir*, II, 123.
  58. The most important usage of Hadith material in British Punjab by a non-Muslim to vilify Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and Islam was made by Rajpal who compiled a number of traditions relating to the details of Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) private life. The book was titled as *Rangila Rusul*. Muslims went to court against him but he was handed down mild punishment which were later altogether overruled by a decision from High Court in 1927. He was later assassinated by 'Ilam Din of Lahore in April 1929. For more details about Rajpal affair, record of judicial proceedings and life of 'Ilam Din, cf. Zafar Iqbal Nagina. *Ghazi 'Ilam Din Shahid* (Lahore, 1998). It is surprising to note that such an important incident that stirred the communal politics of Punjab throughout the 1920s and which had a visible link with the 'objectionable' traditions in Hadith literature was not touched upon directly or brought into use to add weight to the arguments by Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari or *Balagh*. However, Sana'ullah Amritsari did write a rejoinder to *Rangila Rusul*. Cf. *Muqaddas Rusul*. (Lahore, repr. ca. 1995).
  59. Their numbers have been noted by Ahmad-ud-Din as limited to four.
  60. *Tafsir*, V, 299.
  61. *Tafsir*, I, 49–50. An article published in *Balagh* noticed that the details for ablution have been given in the Quran and not for the actual act of prayer for which purification is sought. This was used as an argument to prove that there never were defined rituals of prayers under different Prophets and even during the lifetime of the Prophet Namaz underwent different modifications before a common mode of prayer was arrived at and established among the Muslims. Now that there did exist an established form of prayer among the Muslims, it was better for all to stick to it. In case some group or individual wanted to opt for some other way, it should not be allowed to become too serious a cause for clash. *Balagh* 5, 8 (November 1928): 11–4.



62. *Tafsir*, I, 57–8. The minimum numbers of special prayers per day was calculated by Ahmad-ud-Din as two.
63. By this logic he allowed menstruating women to offer prayers.
64. *Tafsir*, I, 76–7.
65. *Ibid.*, 53. For such views, Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din was described by his opponents as projecting a 'Brahmo Samaj Version' of Islam. For Ahmad-ud-Din, however, this was hardly an allegation as he regarded Brahmo teachings as inspired from Quran. *Tafsir*, VII, 163.
66. *Tafsir*, I, 272.
67. *Tafsir*, I, 282.
68. *Ibid.*, 286–7.
69. Ahmad-ud-Din rebutted those who project the importance of the Ka'ba—other than its sacredness for Muslims—as the centre of all major religions. He argued that had Ka'ba been the centre for all the religious guides of the world then the people of Mecca must have been familiar with their teachings and doctrines. But no such traces are to be found. *Tafsir*, II, 29.
70. *Tafsir*, I, 331.
71. *Ibid.*, 336.
72. *Balagh* 1, 4 (June 1924): 20.
73. Sindhi, ed. *Burhan-ul-Qur'an*, 49. It is only conjectural to suggest that such a direct link between two existed. An extremely learned man of letters with an independent mindset, Azad could not easily have been influenced by a scholar of a lesser stature.
74. Muhammad Husayn 'Arshi, *Iqbal Payambar-i-Ummid: Maqalat-i 'Allama 'Arshi Amritsari* (ed.) Tassadaq Husayn Raja (Lahore, 1990), 234–47.
75. Shaykh 'Ata' Ullah (ed.) *Makatib-i-Iqbal*, (Lahore, 2005), 97–8.
76. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore, repr. 1965), 171–73.
77. *Makatib-i-Iqbal*, 150.
78. 'Allama Muhammad Inayat Ullah Khan Mashriqi, *Khutbat wa Maqalat*, (Lahore, n.d.), 59.
79. Mashriqi, *Quranic System of Law*, (Pehawar, 1954), 7.
80. Sana'ullah Amritsari's *Khaksari Tehrik aur uska Bani*, (Amritsar, 1939), is one example.
81. With the present state of Muslim affairs, Mashriqi doubted if Muslims were deserving of salvation or reward in the Hereafter. He stated: 'A nation whose present state of affairs is in disarray shall experience the same in the Hereafter. Wellbeing in this world is the correct criteria for wellbeing in the Hereafter. Mashriqi, *Khutbat wa Maqalat*, 236.
82. Sana'ullah Amritsari responded that there is nothing pioneering about content-analysis as a method for Hadith analysis. The Companions themselves had laid down rules for this practice. One such instance was 'A'isha's refusal to accept Ibn 'Umar's tradition for its apparent contradiction with a verse of the Quran. Sana'ullah then quoted basic rules for content-analysis as specified by Ibn Jawzi. This had been done by Sayyid Ahmad Khan as well in his critiques of Hadith studies. *Ahl-i-Hadith*, 22 November 1929, 2–3.
83. Sana'ullah Amritsari wrote a series of articles against Niyaz Fatehpuri in his journal from December 1931 onwards.
84. A reprint of these essays is now available in book form titled *Qur'an-i-Majid: Kalam-i-Rusul ya Kalam Allah* (Lahore, repr. 2003). Even Sana'ullah Amritsari, a staunch critic of Ummat-i-Muslima, contributed an article to this anthology setting aside his

- differences with religious doctrines of the organization which had sponsored its publication.
85. Sayyid Muhibbul Haq, *Balagh-ul-Haq* (Agra, n.d.), 114.
  86. He strongly condemned a Chakralawi-like approach of Ahl al-Qur'an scholars because that, according to him, distorted the meanings of the Quran and lead to uncalled for changes in the established ritual observances of the Muslims. Haq, *Shar'a-tul-Haq* (Patna, ca. 1920), 69.
  87. *Ibid.*, 35.
  88. *Balagh* 7, 2–3 (May–June 1930), Zamima, 9. One such gathering took place in 1930. The event did not go smoothly as planned because of city administration's refusal to grant permission to the organizers for making use of a school premise as venue for the event. Alternative arrangements had to be made at the last moment. Among those who attended the gathering included Muhibbul Haq, Tamanna 'Imadi, Hashmat 'Ali Lahauri, Shaykh 'Ata' Ullah and Ghazi Mehmud Dharampal.
  89. Aslam Jayrajpuri, *Hamunay Dini 'Ulum* (Lahore, repr. n.d.), 63–6.
  90. *Ibid.*, 105–6.
  91. Qamar Ahmad 'Usmani, *'Azab-i-Qabar aur Qur'an* (Lahore, 2007), 15–6. Manazir Ahsan Gilani, an important Deoband scholar and historian, concurred that the Hadith were basically a history of the period in which the Prophet lived. Careful measures were adopted for the accurate preservation of only those portions of Hadith literature which were relevant to providing 'essential details' about religion and a degree of uncertainty was allowed to be remained in the 'non-essential details'. Gilani, *Tadwin-i-Hadith* (Lahore, 2005), 9, and 232–6.
  92. *Nuqush* (Lahore), April–May 1968, Khutut Nambar.
  93. Jayrajpuri, *Dini 'Ulum*, 95. He simply stated that the Prophet himself determined the ritual details of different Islamic observances and that the Muslims had been told to look for an exemplary mode of action in the personage of the Prophet.
  94. *Ibid.*, 94.
  95. According to Aslam Jayrajpuri, the context of the verse makes it clear that there is a reference to some figure or authority which would be present in every age. Maulwi 'Abdullah had offered a similar view with the difference that he had understood the term *Rasul* as a synonym for the Quran and not a reference to the central Islamic authority as was the case with Jayrajpuri. Cf. Jayrajpuri, *Tarikh-i-Islam ka Ja'iza: Qur'an ki Roshni men* (Lahore, 1995), 10.
  96. Jayrajpuri, *Dini 'Ulum*, 94.
  97. Although some of Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi's works on this issue appeared during the life of Aslam Jayrajpuri, it is not to suggest that Ja'far Shah was consciously extending Jayrajpuri's thesis or that he regarded him as his direct inspiration. A contrast has been drawn between the two at this point so as to trace the development of discourse on the role and authority of the Prophet and the concept of revelation.
  98. Phulwarwi, *Ijtihadi Masa'il* (Lahore, 1999), 104.
  99. He gave the example of the compilation of the Quran which, according to him, was done in the light of revelation though it was not recorded in the Quran as such. Phulwarwi, *Maqam-i-Sunnat* (Rawalpindi, 2005), 62–3.
  100. *Saqafat* (Lahore), January 1956, 65; *Maqam-i-Sunnat*, 62–3.
  101. *Balagh* (Amritsar) 16, 6 (June 1939): 60–6.
  102. *Al-Bayan* (Amritsar) 4, 5 (May 1942): 36.
  103. He laid out his belief regarding Hadith in more concrete terms in a written polemic with Zafar Ahmad 'Usmani that took place after the creation of Pakistan. He clearly stated that he found it outside the precincts of faith to be reliant on Quran at the

expense of Hadith for derivation of religious doctrines and practices. But in the same breath he refused to extend unqualified support to Hadith literature and *a priori* approval of its authenticity. This approach was not dissimilar from that of Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

104. *Al-Bayan* (Lahore) 1, 4 (December 1949): 25–6.
105. Several contentious issues like caliphate and Prophet's relations with his wife 'A'isha, have been touched upon in Ahadith reported by Shahab Zuhri. The content of these traditions was considered so damning to the cause of Sunni Islam that one of the hardcore, militant leaders of recent past—Haqq Nawaz Jhangvi—also came to share these ideas of Tamanna 'Imadi. Mufti Muhammad Tahir Makki, 'Ta'qdim wa Ta'aruf' in Tamanna Imadi, *Jama'ul-Qur'an* (Karachi, 1994), 32.
106. 'Imadi, *Jama'ul-Qur'an*, 365.
107. It should be noted that Shaykh 'Ata' Ullah of Gujrat had preceded Tamanna 'Imadi in insisting on the written collection of the Quran during the Prophet's lifetime. It was published in 1907 and he argued that the Prophet had all the necessary material and qualified staff at his disposal to ensure that Divine Revelations were copied almost immediately after their revelation. As pointed out in Chapter 4, Maulwi 'Abdullah, too, shared a similar view about the compilation of the Quran.
108. 'Imadi, *Jama'ul-Qur'an*, 230.
109. *Ibid.*, 328.
110. *Ibid.*, 202.
111. Cf. *Faran*, Karachi, January 1971, 13–37; September 1972, 22–33; October 1972, 7–18.
112. *Al-Furqan* (Bareilly) 7, 9–12 (1940): 285–7.
113. Sayyid Abul 'Ala Maududi, *Tafhimat* (Lahore, 2006), I, 356.
114. *Ibid.*, 361. In refutation of this argument, Sana'ullah Amritsari had written one of the earliest treatises on Maududi's doctrine of Hadith. He held the opinion that most of the traditionists were jurists as well. In this regard he cited the example of Bukhari. Hence it leaves little scope for any other traditionist-jurisprudent when the same job has already been done before him. Amritsari, *Khitab ba Maududi* (Amritsar, 1946), 11–2.
115. The best example of such an 'authentic Hadith' for which Maududi offers an explanation strictly on the principles of *danzat*, is the one about 'Saranic Verses'. Cf. Chapter 3 for details.
116. Maududi, *Tafhimat*, I, 388. The epithet *Mizaj Shanas-i-Rusul* came to be used by Maududi's opponents as a term to ridicule him for his alleged towering claims about his own scholarship.
117. One such Hadith from *Sahih Bukhari* rejected by Maududi is about Solomon's intercourse with his 99 wives in a single night. Maududi explained the impossibility of such an event and stated that an unnecessary insistence on justifying every single Hadith is a factor responsible for fanning the *Inkar-i-Hadith* trends. *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an* (Lahore) 63, 1:67.
118. *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an* 49, 1–2: 101.
119. One 'argument' given by Maududi in this regard is that every person is dependent on the 'single report' of his mother to know whether he is the legitimate son of his father or not. *Tafhimat*, I, 341. His rebuttal to Munkir-i-Hadith's main argument of the unacceptability of single reports is that the traditionist's use of the term *zann* with respect to the utility of single reports in matters of essential beliefs and practices has been misunderstood as 'conjectural' when the implied meaning of the term is 'un-exact' or only 'probable'. *Tafhimat*, I, 350–1.

120. Ibid., 331.
121. Ibid., 261–3.
122. Ibid., 277–80.
123. Hamid ud-Din Farahi, *Tafsir-i-Qur'an ke Usul* (New Delhi), 2003, 87. He argues that it is the traditionist's cardinal rule that when two contradictory Ahadith are found they establish the supremacy of one over the other on the basis of either *isnad* or *darayat*. The same should be applicable in case of a clash between Qur'an and Hadith. In their case the supremacy of the Quran should be acknowledged as absolute over any contradicting Hadith because the former has continuous chains of transmission. Ibid., 192.
124. According to the 'Farahi school' of Quranic exegesis, the text of the Quran is structured on the basis of the following themes: *indhar* (warning), which is sometimes general (*indhar 'amm*) and sometimes specific; *imam hujjat* (providing conclusive proofs before judgment); *bara'at* (decision for acquittal); *hijrat* (injunction for withdrawal or migration); *jaza* and *saza* (retribution and punishment). The Quran is thus organized into seven recurring groups of chapters (*sab' mathani*), seven pairs each, consisting of chapters revealed in both Mecca and Medina, and each addressed to a specific group of people. Muhammad Khalid Masud, 'Rethinking Shari'a: Javed Ahmad Ghamidi on *hudud*', *Die Welt des Islams* 47, 3–4 (November 2007): 362.
125. Dr 'Abdul Ra'uf Zafar, *Muhaddith* (Lahore), 33, 8 (August 2001): 70.
126. Zafar, *Uloom-ul-Hadith*, 936.
127. Amin Ahsan Islahi, *Usul-i-Fehm-i-Qur'an* (Lahore, 1999), 42. In his own lectures on Hadith, however, Islahi relied much on *darayat* and rarely carried out an *Isnad*-based criticism. He simply discarded some Ahadith of *Bukhari* and *Muwatta* because they did not conform to Quranic principles or rational ideas. For details, cf. *Tadabbur-i-Hadith: Sharh-i-Muwatta Imam Malik* (*Muntakhib Abwab*) (Lahore, 2000); *Tadabbur-i-Hadith: Sharh-i-Sahih Bukhari* (*Muntakhib Abwab*) (Lahore, 2002–05), 2 Vols.
128. Islahi, *Mubadi-i-Tadabbur-i-Hadith* (Lahore, 2000), 61. In another point of agreement with Maududi, he stated that the compilers of Ahadith were not infallible men and they did commit errors. Like Maududi he quoted the Ahadith about Abraham's three lies, Moses slapping of the angel of death, and 'Satanic Verses' to prove his point. *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an* 45, 2: 143–4.
129. In a major deviation from the traditional stance on the classical traditionists, Islahi shared Tamanna 'Imadi's condemnation of Shahab Zuhri. He accused him of being a Shi'a and reporting lies about the Companions and the wives of the Prophet to discredit their reputation. One reason for his dismissal of tradition regarding the sentence of *Rajam* (stoning to death) was that it portrayed 'Umar's negligence in the compilation of the Quranic text in a proper manner.
130. Some internal rifts among the members of Ummat-i-Muslima resulted in the issuance of two separate journals, *Balagh* and *Al-Bayan*, under the banner of the same organization. It was on 'Ibad Ullah Akhtar's intervention that the matter was conveniently resolved and it was decided to continue with *Al-Bayan* as the only representative journal of the Ummat-i-Muslima. *Al-Bayan* (Amritsar) 1, (3 June 1939).
131. Late in his life when Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari had lost his eyesight, he used to dictate Quranic commentary to Qamar Amritsari—a disciple of Muhammad Husayn 'Arshi Amritsari. After Ahmad-ud-Din's death, it was 'Abdullah Pehalvan (Abdullah the Wrestler) who made use of oral records and points jotted down from Ahmad-ud-Din's lectures to compile the full text of latter's Quranic commentary.
132. *Al-Bayan* (Amritsar), 4, 9 (September 1942): 4.

133. Such a list of questions put forth by Sana'ullah demanded directions from the text of Quran about various ritual practices and forbiddance of eating the flesh of cats and mice. *Ahl-i-Hadith*, 22 October 1937, 8–9.
134. *Al-Bayan* (Amritsar), 7, 11 (November 1945): 59–60.
135. *Tafsir*, II, 140.
136. Sayyid Abul 'Ala Maududi, *Hadith aur Qur'an* (Karachi, 1954), 93.
137. This issue continues to be of significant importance even today and a number of websites report discussions and offer either reason to justify the event or cite historical reference to dismiss it as wrongly reported.
138. Habib-ur-Rahman A'zami, *Nusrat-ul-Hadith* (A'zamgarh, 1941), 172–3. At the end of his treatise, Habib-ur-Rahman expressed his disappointment with the fact that Haqq Go's book had been published in Sana'ullah Amritsari's press. The latter, obviously, did not share the views expressed in the book and published it in his capacity as the owner of a printing press in Amritsar.
139. *Al-Bayan* (Amritsar) 2, 5 (May 1940): 10. Muhammad Husayn 'Arshi had earlier written a satirical poem on *Bukhari* critical of its contents which abrogate the Quran and allegedly insult the Prophet, his wives, and Companions. *Balagh* (Amritsar) 6, 8–9 (November–December 1929): 31–2.
140. Barq was typical of a western educated Muslim well acquainted with the colonialist outlook of early twentieth century Punjab whose writings appeared to be overly influenced by Orientalist constructions of 'the East' and reflecting cultural-moral values of *petit bourgeoisie*. For a detailed essay on Barq, cf. Markus Daechsel, 'The Civilizational Obsessions of Ghulam Jilani Barq', in Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann, eds. *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London, 2004), 282.
141. Ghulam Jilani Barq, 'Inayat Ullah Khan Mashriqi' in *Nuqub* (Lahore), Shaksiyat Nambar, 1202.
142. Even Muhammad Husayn 'Arshi, while commenting on the book, noted that in parts of Barq's work his tone was too harsh and disrespectful which he attributed to young scholar's passion for Islam. *Do Islam* (Lahore, repr. 2003), 28.
143. *Ibid.*, 123. Later in his career, Barq renounced his earlier stance on Hadith under the influence of Maulana Zahid-ul-Husayni and Shorish Kashmiri. He even published a 'statement of repentance' for this purpose. 'Abdul 'Aziz Sahir, ed. *Daktar Ghulam Jilani Barq ke Khutut* (Lahore, 1999), 29. Also, he penned a brief monograph on the history of Hadith. In that, Barq did not give answers to the objections he himself had raised so incisively in his previous writings and was content with giving a traditional account of the history of Hadith literature. The book was appended with a list of Ahadith on various aspects of beliefs, morals, and practices. It is surprising to note that a professed 'rationalist' like Barq has favoured a tradition which bars women from becoming the head of state. Barq, *Tarikh-i-Hadith* (Karachi, repr. 2005), 190.
144. Interview with Dr Sakhia Sakha Ullah, 12 March 2006, Lahore.
145. The building named Gira Bhawan had belonged to some Hindu organization before partition and after its allotment to Ummat-i-Muslima it was renamed as Dar-ul-Qur'an. Interview with Dr Sakhia Sakha Ullah, March 2006, Lahore.

# 6

## ‘God’s Kingdom on Earth’: Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, the Pakistani State, and the Politics of Islam, 1947–1969

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The Ahl al-Qur’an groups and the Ulama in their writings contributing to the discourse on Islamic reform had primarily been concerned with the idea of reforming the beliefs and practices of individual Muslims. The question of an ideal Islamic state did not take centre stage since the Muslims had already lost their political authority and it could not possibly have been revived in case of an independent India established on principles of the rule of the majority. In the 1940s, however, when the demand for an independent state for Muslims, to be established on the basis of Islam, gained momentum, the question of an Islamic state also came to be widely debated. Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, the most influential and prolific of the Ahl al-Qur’an-related intellectuals, significantly contributed to these debates. This chapter will provide a detailed account of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez’s Tulu’-i-Islam as an important Ahl al-Qur’an organization which assumed the role of the most representative organization upholding such ideas, especially after 1947. The focus will be on Parwez’s proposed line of reformative action for the nascent Muslim state and its system of laws which will be shown as having a bearing on the politics of Islam in Pakistan up to 1969. At a broader level, the chapter would also focus on the religious worldview of the Pakistani power elites governing the state during that period and the influence of the discourse of Islamic Modernism in the shaping of their ideals.



## 6.2. GHULAM AHMAD PARWEZ (1903–85): HIS LIFE AND WORKS

The discourse on the questioning of Hadith and the relative positioning of Quran and Hadith has come to be virtually associated with the figure of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez. The epithet 'Parwezi' coined and used by Ulama as an insult to the dogma it supposedly refers to, subsumes all those with untraditional views on Hadith under the category of *Fitna Inkar-i-Hadith*. So intense has been Ulama's dislike for Parwez that they have found fault with every single component of his name. Parwez, the 'root word' for Parwezi, was the name of the Persian emperor who had insulted Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by tearing up the letter that was sent to him as an invitation to accept Islam. The 'Ghulam Ahmad' part of his name is a reminder of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani and his 'false claims of Prophet-hood' allegedly sponsored and nurtured by the British government to sap the Muslims spirit for Jihad. As for the title, Parwez is either referred to as Chaudhri or Mister. Although Chaudhri is Parwez's surname, the term is generally used to emphasize a 'non-Ulama like' background for a person who, as per his 'professional caste', can more aptly be conceived as a stereotypical agrarian landowner from Punjab than as a scholar of Islam. As 'Mr Ghulam Ahmad', Parwez is portrayed as being inspired by Western ideas or part of some 'Mirza Ghulam Ahmad-like' conspiracy hatched by the West to divide and weaken the Muslims and infuse in their dogmas certain un-Islamic beliefs and ideas.

What makes Parwez the centre figure of controversy in the revisionist discourse on Isnad paradigm and allows him to be used as the tagline for the popular description and perception of various strands of thought held among the Ahl al-Qur'an, is not just the novelty of his ideas but the success he achieved in disseminating them through the copious set of his writings and establishment of effective organizational structures.<sup>1</sup>

Parwez was a prolific writer who wrote on varied themes of Islamic socio-political and economic system, dogmatic disputations, history and Quranic exegesis. He has been the bestselling author among all the Ahl al-Qur'an scholars and his books have been reprinted continuously till today. This ongoing popularity of Parwez's work is due as much for his persuasive style of rather flowery prose as it is because of the organizational structures in the form of Idara Tulu'-i-Islam and its various branches that he had established during his lifetime. After his death the Idara (organization) continued to impact upon people through its regular publication of its monthly journal *Tulu'-i-Islam* and Ghulam Ahmad Parwez's writings. A

large number of Parwez's audio and video lectures—recorded at a time when such facilities were hardly available—have been digitally preserved and put online so that they can reach out to a wider audience.<sup>2</sup> For the reasons that Parwez is the only Ahl al-Qur'an scholar<sup>3</sup> who offers a detailed and convincingly argued alternative to almost every aspect of traditionally held beliefs (although not so much for practices), and that his printed works and lectures are readily accessible, makes him the most (in)famous figure among the Ahl al-Qur'an whose influence has continued even after two decades of his death.<sup>4</sup>

### **6.3. GHULAM AHMAD PARWEZ'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT: BACKGROUND**

Parwez was born in a religious family of Batala in the Gurdaspur District of East Punjab and received religious education at home. His grandfather Maulwi Rahim Bakhsh was a religious man deeply involved in mysticism. Under his influence and guidance, Parwez's religious ideas in this initial period were strictly in conformity with the traditionally held beliefs of the vast majority of Sunni Muslims. Along with the religious education imparted to him at home, Parwez continued with his school education and went on to complete his graduation from the Punjab University in 1924. In 1927 he joined the Central Secretariat of the Government of India (and later the Government of Pakistan) and remained in service till 1955 when he took premature retirement in order to pursue his intellectual endeavours with fullest consideration.

The transformation of Parwez's religious ideas came about in the wake of his encounter with a 'controversial' Hadith.<sup>5</sup> While the initial 'colliding impact' of the meaning of the Hadith left him bewildered, it did not immediately translate into a radical revocation of religion altogether though it did force him into thinking of revision of the dogmas ingrained in his mind since childhood. Such dents had been made to his religious worldview even before his entry into university life. It was after his arrival in Lahore and exposure to the stimulating intellectual and creative atmosphere of the pluralistic metropolis that Parwez inched closer to developing his ideas further in a vein of free enquiry. What guided him most in this regard was the academically fruitful company of poet-philosopher 'Allama Muhammad Iqbal. Parwez would frequent the intellectual gatherings at Iqbal's home and became an ardent admirer of the latter's poetry and other philosophical treatises. Parwez who was only a student at that time, would sit as a passive attendant of the discussions

that took place. The much trumpeted intimacy of Iqbal and Parwez propagated by the admirers of the latter is not corroborated by any reference from Iqbal's letters or other known details from his circle of private friends. But it cannot be denied, as analysis of Parwez's major writings later in the chapter would reveal, that Iqbal exercised a strong influence in the shaping of Parwez's religious, socio-political and economic ideas. Parwez wrote extensively on elucidating these ideas of, and from, Iqbal along with penning interpretative commentaries of Iqbal's Persian verses.

By the late 1920s, Parwez had neither formally taken off his career as a scholar of Islam nor were his religious ideas too deviant from the traditional ones to catch attention. Before a change in his religious outlook became more visible Parwez came into contact with Aslam Jayrajpurī from whom he borrowed several ideas on Hadith criticism and was also able to chisel his knowledge of Arabic language and lexicography. It was in the year 1935 when Parwez stayed at Aslam Jayrajpurī's residence in Delhi for six months to benefit from his ideas on Hadith and Quranic exegesis, and expertise in Arabic.<sup>6</sup> In the same year, *Tulu'-i-Islam* started its first stint as a monthly journal under the editorship of Nazir Niyazi—a close associate of Iqbal and a notable scholar of Iqbal studies. The issuance of *Tulu'-i-Islam* was claimed to be in fulfilment of the idea floated by Iqbal who had stressed the need for a journal which could promote the teachings of Quran among the Muslims and an understanding of Quran in its true rational and devotional spirit. The journal ceased publication in less than a year. During this period the journal did not espouse controversial religious ideas. The journal was restarted in 1938 soon after the death of Muhammad Iqbal. An additional purpose to be served by the journal during its second tenure was to counter the writings of nationalist Ulama during that time.<sup>7</sup> Parwez claimed to have pursued this task on the insistence of Muhammad Ali Jinnah himself. By 1942 this purpose had been partially realized as the Pakistan movement gained momentum and various Urdu and English dailies cropped up to carry forward Muslim League's line of argument on two-nation theory. The publication of *Tulu'-i-Islam* was, hence, discontinued<sup>8</sup> until it was revived in 1948 and has continued since then.

In the early 1930s Parwez had started propounding his religious ideas in articles written for different journals. His critics have noted in these writings his earlier regard for the Hadith and Sunnat and their relevance in his opinion to serve as benchmarks for the guidance of the Muslims. In a letter to 'Abdul Majid Daryabadi in 1932, Parwez had written:

...If in observance of Namaz, Fasting, Hajj and Zakat we are following Ahadith then [it is because] these traditions (practices of the Holy Prophet) have reached us as a continuous practice. What is the position of these Ahadith? It is obvious that they have purely religious value and not a historical value as thought by the deniers of Ahadith."<sup>9</sup>

Before Parwez's controversial ideas on Ahadith clouded his reputation, many of his writings were admired for their clarity of argument. One incident which brought Parwez to the spotlight of scholarly writings on Islam was the judgment delivered by a court in the princely state of Bahawalpur on the religious status of the Ahmadiyya community. A case had been filed in 1926 by woman seeking divorce on the premise that her husband had become an apostate by becoming an Ahmadi. The court deliberated on this issue for many years and during the course of proceedings consulted such stalwarts as Anwar Shah Kashmiri and Mufti Muhammad Shafi. But in the final verdict, delivered by the court in 1935, the judge relied heavily on an article written by Parwez on the finality of the prophethood to arrive at the conclusion that the Ahmadis were to be regarded as outside the pale of the Muslim community.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, an appreciation of his writings on the Two-Nation Theory and in condemnation of 'Abul Kalam Azad's concept of 'unity of religions' can be gauged from the fact that conservative Deobandi scholars like Yusuf Banori and Zafar Ahmad 'Usmani relied on his arguments for their own purposes.<sup>11</sup>

It was in the late 1930s and early 1940s that Parwez became a controversial scholar because of a change in his ideas brought about under the influence of Aslam Jayrajpuri with whom he had been able to interact frequently as both were living in the same city and had fostered an academically rewarding interaction with each other. In one of his earliest expressions of scepticism for Hadith literature, Parwez mostly reiterated Aslam Jayrajpuri's notion of abiding by the *Markaz-i-Millat* (central authority of the Muslim community) as equivalent to the obedience of God and the Prophet.<sup>12</sup> He limited the role of the Prophet to the interpretation of the Quran for his own age as the head of the then Muslim community and state. Subsequent to his death, the task was handed over to the chosen pious Caliphs who, in consultation with the learned among the Muslims, arrived at an understanding and interpretation of the Quranic injunctions for the issues of their times. Such an arrangement allowed for dynamism in the growth of Islamic law and jurisprudence as the *Markaz* had the authority to decide which of the

Quranic rulings and edicts had a permanent value and which ones were mutable. But Parwez hastened to add that not every state could acquire this authority and only the one truly representative assemblage of the pious Muslims and scholars deserved obedience in this manner.<sup>13</sup> In another treatise Parwez again applied his mentor's ideas regarding the historicity of Hadith literature to argue for its conjectural status and limited utility as a source of history and not religion.<sup>14</sup> Such writings brought Parwez directly into the league of deniers of Hadith and subjected him to the criticism of the Ulama.

While the other Ahl al-Qur'an, too, had relied on similar principles with regard to discarding of Hadith and a revisionist Quranic exegesis, what differentiated Ghulam Ahmad Parwez from many of his predecessors in his stance relating to Ahl al-Qur'an was that he was not formally trained as a scholar in any madrasa and many a western idea had impressed itself upon him during his formative years. These traits were shared by him with his contemporaries like Inayat Ullah Mashriqi and Ghulam Jilani Barq. Among other variables common to the shaping of their world view at large and religious thought in particular were the generally prevalent intellectual trends of the inter-war period in colonial South Asia celebrating a psychic obsession with power, authority and notions of 'rationalism'.<sup>15</sup> Parwez—like Mashriqi and Barq—was not simply being moved by the concern of the missionary and other non-Muslims' attacks on the religion of Islam, but also with the outlining of a viable alternative that could put an end to the schisms amid the Muslim ranks to revive a glorified past that looked even more appealing in a period of perceived intellectual poverty and more pressing considerations of political turmoil, material pauperism, and subjugation to foreign authority. In his response Mashriqi had resorted to organizing a Muslim [semi-] militia along fascist lines; and Barq had attempted to deduce scientific findings from the Quranic text and furnishing rational arguments for its validity of its Divinity. On Parwez's part the panacea offered sought to achieve the twin purposes of a 'rational Islam' and a strong Islamic state organized in strict conformity with the guidelines of the Quran. Paradoxically the proposed state was as much for the acquisition of power and its utilization for the realization of a pre-conceived utopian past, addressing of politico-philosophical questions of the age, organization of Muslim community and its collective welfare, as it was for the cultivation of an environment conducive to the growth and exercise of one's rational faculties and asserting of individual self. This was due to the fact that firstly, Parwez did not indulge in a 'scripturalist' reading of the Quranic text because of



his avowed dissociation from and severance with the authority of the past in the form of Hadith, jurisprudential findings and Quranic exegesis. He appropriated for himself the right to interpret and understand the Quran in the light of his own limited capabilities and to find the solutions therein for the problems of his age. Secondly, his conceptualization of Islam was that of a *Din* and not *Mazhab* or religion. The former is a more comprehensive term and encapsulate the entire spectrum of societal and individual lives including its social-economic system, polity, and code of law. These attributes of *Din* are in stark contrast to *Mazhab* which—as understood by Parwez and translated as ‘religion’—comprises of blind imitation of pseudo-Divine injunctions; subservience to the exploitative forces of priesthood; and observance of spiritless rituals. *Din*, on the other hand:

gives full scope to man's initiative and discretion. It is meant for a free and intelligent person, a person who has the courage to think, judge and act for himself. *Din* offers broad principles which give guidance to man in the adventure of life and which enable him to attain the goal of self realization and social welfare. These principles, however, are not meant to be followed blindly. They are to be applied with intelligence and forethought.<sup>16</sup>

In the pursuance of these intellectual endeavours Parwez was meticulously thorough in his approach. He did not simply offer a revised interpretation of Islam but also sought to establish his credentials as a learned scholar in order for his works to exercise influence on its intended audience of mostly college graduates and others with a non-specialized knowledge of Islam. This he did by expressing his knowledge on every aspect of Islamic history and Quranic exegesis. In the 1940s he simply focused on writing a multi-volume history of prophethood from Moses to Jesus and then Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), based on Biblical sources and Christian histories. He took years to finish an exhaustive lexicography of Quran dealing with the roots for every term used in the Quran. The principles he elucidated for the usage of Arabic lexicography were employed by him in all his writings and were meant to serve as a guide for all those interested in developing an understanding of the Quranic text on their own. Another project of his which took long years to finish was an indexing of the topics touched upon in the Quran. A separate commentary of the Quran was dictated by him during the last years of his life but most of it remains scattered in many of his audio and video lectures. Besides that there were individual monographs on Western philosophy, world religions, mysticism, Islamic socio-economic systems and so on. But all



these works, in one way or the other, relied on the more basic works done by Parwez on the indexing and lexicography of the Quran.

Although Parwez's lexicography was not published till 1960, the 'fantastic lexique technique' built up by him to explain Quranic chapters and verses in modernist terms<sup>17</sup> was put to use in his writings preceding the publication of the lexicon. An appraisal of Parwez's lexique technique, hence, serves as the starting point and the key to understanding his methodology for arriving at a differentiated understanding of the Quran and other aspects of Islamic beliefs and practices as well as institutions. Before him, Sayyid Ahmad Khan had adopted a similar strategy by outlining his own principles of exegesis on the basis of which he ascribed new meanings to the generally understood words and verses of Quran under the veneer of either a contextualized or metaphorical interpretation. The Quranic exegesis of Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi and Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amrtisari had been similarly devoid of non-Quranic Muslim and Biblical sources to allow for the stretching of Quranic meanings in ways hitherto unknown in the Islamic literature on Quran spanning over centuries. These commentaries of Quran—and others with a similar intent of recasting the narration of supernatural events in Quran on 'rational' basis—had been objected to by the more learned scholars of Arabic among the Ulama as superficial and lacking in basic knowledge of the intricacies of the language. Parwez sought to plug this lacuna by trying to establish his credentials for extensive grammatical and etymological knowledge of the Quranic language. This had to be done in order to avoid the general impression that the Ahl al-Qur'an ascribed wishful meaning to Quranic verses. Thus, the lexicon was a central component of Parwez's 'Quranic literature' and served not just as principles for Quranic analysis but also as a verifiable claim to his competence in the Arabic language.<sup>18</sup> It does not imply that Parwez was unsure of the non-acceptability of his lexical findings and backlash from the Ulama for an inconsistency between his own interpretations and the generally accepted ones.<sup>19</sup> But Parwez's concern was to mitigate the apprehensions of a targeted Muslim readership about his expertise in Arabic rather than convince the Ulama of his genuine scholarship.

For this purpose Parwez appended his findings with some suitable evidence from other works of Arabic lexicography. Like his approach to the other referential works of the past, Parwez was selective in his usage of the classical Arabic lexicons. It is because, in his opinion, these works had been compiled mostly during the Abbasid period—a time when the Arabic language had undergone considerable transformation under Persian

influence in terms of culture, philosophy and other forms of knowledge, thus clouding the real sense and spirit of the Quranic message.<sup>20</sup> In order to 'retrieve' the meanings of a word as understood by Arabs in the days of the Prophet, Parwez—like Hamid-ud-Din Farahi and in appreciation of his works—relied on pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. For its usage in the Quranic text, Parwez looked into the root of a particular word and its various attributes. In this regard he was guided by the peculiar context in which the word had been employed in the text to determine whether the meaning intended was literal or metaphorical. Or, for that purpose, he traced how the same word had been used at a different place in Quran. An application of these principles is best exemplified in his interpretation of terms supposedly demeaning to the status of women. The term word *Qawwam* in the Quranic verse 4:34 has been explained and translated by the exegetes as 'master' or ruler. According to Parwez, Tabari—the first to come up with a written Tafsir—arrived at this meaning at a time when the 'real' Islam had been overshadowed by 'Persian Islam' and under the influence of repressive dictatorships. The women had were again denigrated to their pre-Islamic sub-human status in violation of the rights 'originally' accorded to them by Islam. In his lexicon, on the other hand, Parwez traced the word *qawwam* from the root *qwm* which he translated as meaning 'striking a balance'.<sup>21</sup> As per rules of the Arabic language, all subsequent words derived from the root were to possess similar meanings. For this reason the translation suggested by Parwez was that of a 'partner' as it was purportedly more in tune with the meaning of the root of the word alluded to.<sup>22</sup> Such an application of exegetical and lexical principles runs through the whole corpus of Parwez's writings.

#### 6.4. FROM INDIVIDUAL SELF TO COLLECTIVE EXISTENCE

As already discussed, Parwez not only theorized the establishment of a truly Islamic state for the revitalization of spiritual uplift and material progress of the Muslims but also emphasized the role of the individual in this enterprise. The individual with his rational faculties and instinctive inclination for freedom and liberty is the building-block of the idyllic 'Muslim world community' that Parwez seeks to construct. Without impressing upon the libratory aspects of Quranic teachings, Parwez could not imagine the blossoming of one's capabilities to the fullest and the harnessing of creative energies for the benefit of Muslim community at large or the workings of an Islamic state. Parwez appeared to be cognizant of the apprehension that if the individual's scope for freedom; independent

course of action; and exercise of judgment remained of secondary importance, then it could extend the state's authority to almost leviathan proportions. In that scenario the 'Islamic Kingdom of God on Earth' would be no better than the Christian model of the medieval ages which had caused the drift of Europeans away from religion into the embrace of a materialistic vision of life.

To address such concerns, Parwez devoted the initial two volumes of *Ma'arif-ul-Qur'an* written during the 1940s, to these musings, even before he had touched upon the outlines of an Islamic state in much detail. The main concern of *Man wa Yazdan* and *Iblis wa Adam* was to redefine the parameters of relationship between Man and God, Rationality and Divinity, and State and Individual. Parwez described Man as one endowed with Divine Energy which comprised the Human Self. This Divine Energy exists in the form of realizable possibilities. The Human Self, hence, has the propensity to grow, evolve, attain higher planes and avoid extinction or stunted growth.<sup>23</sup> It is the pursuance of this growth of Human Self and the actualization of its latent potentialities that defines the relationship between Man and his Creator.<sup>24</sup> Man, by virtue of possessing an autonomous self and a rational being, has been allowed by his Creator to strive for these coveted goals without any hindrance. In this endeavour Man is not held back by his *taqdir* (fate). For Parwez, *taqdir* is more appropriately explained by the term Divine Providence which is God's preordained Law of Nature preserved in the Book of Nature. These Laws of Nature emanate from God and are immutable. Even God Himself is 'bound' by them. According to Parwez: '...God does not use His authorities and powers like a totalitarian dictator rather exercises them in accordance with the order and the law. And this means that the circumstantial demands of the Universe precipitate a reciprocal response from God. In other words it can be said that the reaction from God is in accordance with the external conditions.'<sup>25</sup>

Thus, no force comes in the way of Man's struggle for the realization of material gains and spiritual growth. It is, then, only a question of whether Man is willing to accept the arbitration of Divine rules for the larger aims and purposes of individual and community life; or prefers to acquiesce to the charm of relying purely on his own rational faculties. The consequences of both the options have been made clear to him. If a non-Divine, materialist metaphysical worldview affirming a blind faith in unbridled rationality were to guide the Human Self, the individual would be swayed by their own vested interests and selfish motives for an accumulation of wealth and resources to secure themselves at the expense

of others. The Divine alternative has been explained by the Quran in a metaphorical narration of the 'story of Adam'. Adam in the story does not refer to any single individual by the whole of humanity.<sup>26</sup> In the light of Parwez's lexique technique, Paradise is not a spatial abode of ideal blissfulness but refers to an existing state of abundance during the primordial stage of evolution of mankind, while the root for the word 'Adam' denotes an ability to coexist.<sup>27</sup> The coexistence of 'Adam' on this 'paradise' was in conformity with the Divine rubrics for collective ownership as the means for securing provisions for the growth of Human Self. This idyllic existence came to an abrupt halt as Adam was lured into the trap of individualism. It was the tasting of this 'forbidden fruit' of individual appropriation of factors of production that resulted in divisions among mankind, the drawing of ethno-racial boundaries, mutual rivalries and competition for material resources.<sup>28</sup> Once man had given in to his own rational choice in violation of the Divine guidance, it was inevitable for him to be unable to look at the larger picture of the benefits accruing from collective existence. It was simultaneously accompanied with an anxiety for maximization of material resources in a bid for the preservation of self.

Thus a divinely ordained system of socio-economic nurturing (*Nizam-i-Rububiyyat*)<sup>29</sup> alone ensures the growth of the human self by the way of providing means conducive for this purpose. This is in stark contrast to a materialist view of life which is governed: 'by rationalism as a guide to the economic structure of society; by individualism and private enterprise; by inequality in the accumulation of wealth; and by the hardening of class structure. Self-defeating nationalism and Machiavellian statecraft are its social and organizational reflections.'<sup>30</sup>

The *Nizam-i-Rububiyyat*, on the other hand, strikes at the very roots of an unjust and class-ridden equation of 'haves' and 'have nots' by disallowing the possession of private property and ownership of factors of production.<sup>31</sup> All the material resources are to be appropriated by an Islamic state professing Quranic principle of social justice and economic equity to provide for its members the means of sustenance. The serving of man's physical needs is not an end in itself but only the means of setting the mind free to indulge in higher pursuits of self-development.<sup>32</sup> This Divine Order runs like a joint business venture in which the capital investment is made by God (in the form of natural factors of production) and Man's contribution is only the labour that he puts in that enterprise. So he can claim only that part of the land's produce which he has toiled for and must hand over the rest to God, i.e. devote for the benefit of the

society.<sup>33</sup> He cannot claim dividend from the value of capital because it is God's creation for the benefit of mankind through the Order of *Rububiyyah* and not for any individual's possession and monetary benefit. This makes any form of earnings on capital—whether commercial interest, sleeping partnership and land tenancy—to be considered as *Riba* (usury or interest).<sup>34</sup>

The system, according to Parwez, bears only superficial resemblance with Communism and it cannot be claimed that the Marxist principles have simply been interpolated on to the Islamic ideas of social justice and economic equity. The Islamic system, as claimed by him, had existed in its perfect form in the past under Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the rightly guided caliphs. If there was any borrowing of ideas involved then Communism must be considered as being on the receiving end as opposed to Islam.<sup>35</sup> But a partial borrowing from the Divine Order had left the Communist system in much more of a quandary than the Capitalist system.<sup>36</sup> The most essential component of the *Nizam-i-Rububiyyat* was an acceptance of the supremacy of the Divine—an idea repugnant to Communism. The result was that Communism retained the materialist metaphysics of the Capitalist system and yet strove for the establishment of a society based on such cherished 'non-material' notions of humanity and enlightenment. This was where Karl Marx failed. He did not foresee that while Capitalist exploitation had to be shunned, it had to be followed with some positive affirmation of larger, universal values of good. By maintaining materialism in his philosophy, it became impossible for Marx to offer a philosophical basis for the recognition of intrinsic and eternal values of humanism and virtue or to answer the question as to why should one help the poor and the needy. In case of *Nizam-i-Rububiyyat*, the provision was for the appropriation of resources and their efficient utilization on behalf of the Lord who has created them for the benefit of the mankind and not in the service of the state. When God Himself had enjoined this scheme of economic distribution and called for taking care of the destitute, the metaphysical dilemma stood resolved. This was where the fundamental difference between Communism and *Nizam-i-Rububiyyat* lay. In the latter Man willingly offers his labour in the faith that the resulting dividends shall be mutually shared to the benefit of everyone. He realizes that further progression of his own self is linked to other individuals in the society and that they can only catapult to higher planes of human self if they are working with each other in a collective manner.<sup>37</sup> In case of Communism, the impossibility of metaphysical arguments for the establishment of any set of moral ethos as intrinsically virtuous leaves



it to the oppressive state apparatus to coerce the individual to labour for the state. So, In a nutshell, it may be summarized as:

In the *Rububiyah* society man sells his life to God [and] in the Communist state he sells his mind to the state.<sup>38</sup>

This argument, hence, implies that a Divine world system has more scope for independent reasoning than all the man-made alternatives which claim to be based purely on human reason and unbridled rationality.

### 6.5. THE ISLAMIC STATE AND ITS DYNAMISM

Parwez's proposed Islamic Order of socio-economic nurture was deemed by him as imperative for furnishing every member of the community with propitious opportunities for self-expression and self-development. The establishment and successful working of *Nizam-i-Rububiyyat* inevitably required providing answers to questions about the historical credibility of any such system being in place at any time during Muslim history and the possibility of its 're-establishment' in the Muslim world. Parwez's response to such queries helps clarify his views on the Prophet and the Islamic state.

Contrary to any historical evidence, Parwez insisted that the Divine Order for the socio-economic nurturing of the Muslim community was put into practice during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and perfected upon during the reign of Caliph 'Umar.<sup>39</sup> For the reason that the Prophet was able to erect a Divine Order by countering the exploitative forces of the affluent classes and the priesthood, it was to be inferred that neither was the divinely suggested system impractical, nor was the Prophet a passive onlooker when it came to giving practical shape to Divine rubrics. It was the actualization of all such Divine ideals which proved that the Prophet was not just a postman who delivered the message of God but an extraordinary human being who overcame all the odds in setting an inimitable precedent for the successful implementation of these Orders.<sup>40</sup> This was Parwez's rationale for according the highest status to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in all of humanity because he—despite being a human, albeit an extraordinary one—transformed his whole self and the community at large in perfect accordance with the Divine Knowledge received by him. Recognition of such an accomplishment of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was meant to by Parwez to counteract the general impression that he had scant regard the Prophet's character and



achievements. But it obviously fell considerably short as far as the expectations of the proponents of Hadith went. The reason for this was that by citing the term 'Prophet's precedent' Parwez simply meant that the all-human figure of the Prophet should be an inspiration for other human beings in their struggle for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth, and the methodology adopted by the Prophet to this end should be suitably employed by them but should not blindly mimicked. Parwez did not think that relegating the Prophet to the status of, largely, an inspirational figure and conceiving his role as only methodologically relevant to the realization of Divine objectives for humankind and its society, amounted to mitigating his relevance for the Muslims.

A concomitant implication of such notions is that the Prophet's words recorded in the form of Hadith lose their status of a parallel source of Divine guidance which can be eternally binding for the Muslims of all the ages. The question of the authenticity of these recorded sayings, hence, assumed a secondary importance in his argument. It is because regardless of the authenticity all these sayings, Parwez attributed to them an inherently non-Divine character; therefore, even an authentic tradition, for Parwez, did not serve any significant purpose.<sup>41</sup> For him, the Holy Quran alone served as the source of most authentic Divine guidance. Not only was the Quran to be regarded as the repository of revealed knowledge but also *wahi matlu* as the only source by which this knowledge was relayed to the Prophet. Parwez did not allow scope even for intuition or, for that matter, any form of Divine guidance other than *wahi matlu*. However, in his discussion with Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi on this issue, Parwez failed to come up with a satisfactory explanation about those instances in which the Prophet appeared to have acted on a source other than *wahi matlu*. For example, Parwez was queried by Ja'far Shah as to on what basis had the Prophet put together disparate revelatory passages of the Quran? Parwez responded that it was carried out in the form of a communiqué sent to Muhammad (PBUH), along with the text that was being revealed, through the intermediary services of Angel Gabriel in which the Prophet was guided how a particular verse was to be placed in the Quranic text. The placement of the revelatory passage to its assigned place in the text fulfilled the purpose of the communiqué and it was no longer required to become part of the Quranic text. This process was likened by Parwez to the dictating of a paragraph to a composer with instructions about the punctuations in the sentences. Such instructions do not become part of the text.<sup>42</sup> The inadmissibility of *wahi ghayr matlu* brought back the question of validation of the ritual observances. Parwez,

like his mentor Aslam Jayrapuri, did endorse the prevalent ritual practices but, unlike Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi, he did not cite a divine sanction in their composition to allow for their continuation indefinitely.

In Parwez's proposed alternative for rectifying the ensuing contradiction, the solution was to premise the validation of these practices to a state or caliphate patterned on the precedent set by the Prophet (*Khilafat 'ala Minhaj al-Nubuwwat*). This *Khilafat* was to provide the political and executive framework for the establishment and successful working of Divine commandments in the Muslim community and progressively review the Islamic laws and practices. Its authority to do so was to be derived from the Quran itself and the precedent set by the Prophet and his successive Rightly Guided Caliphs (Abu Bakar, 'Umar, Usman, 'Ali) in the running of state, religious and other affairs.

With regard to religious practices it was clear to Parwez that Quran had not given any details about various ritual observances. A stance to the contrary taken by the likes of Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi was found by Parwez as seriously erroneous and he condemned it as damaging to the cause of dissemination of Quranic teachings.<sup>43</sup> But at the same time Parwez had also found Hadith literature to be least helpful in determining a universal format for Islamic prayers. He argued that had Hadith not been a disputed source of guidance, there would not have been differences in matters of details among different sects with each one of them citing Ahadith in defence of their preferred mode of worship and denouncing that of the rest for not being in accordance with the practice of the Prophet.<sup>44</sup> The only possible solution to this schism, in Parwez's opinion, was the revival of *Khilafat 'ala Minhaj al-Nubuwwat*. This was how the worship details and ritual practices were established among the Muslims in the first place. The Prophet had acted as the politico-administrative and judicial head of the Islamic state. In the execution of these duties, he was not guided by any Divine source and had to rely on his inner resources and rational faculties. He variously consulted his Companions on a variety of issues and this was how Quranic injunctions were understood and interpreted by and for the Muslim community, and measures were adopted for the shaping and successful working of various socio-economic and political institutions and policies in accordance with the dictates of the Quran. In adhering to the meanings of the Quran credited as valid by the Prophet, and decisions taken by him—in concurrence with the consultations and advice of his Companions—the individual was obeying God and His commandments. Such an arrangement continued during the tenure of first four Caliphs of Islam

with the only difference that the Prophet had been replaced by a Caliph although the powers of the latter, as they were being applied within the above mentioned methodological framework, were no different from that of the Prophet as the head of the state. As long as the *Markaz-i-Millat* (central authority of Muslim community) was patterned on the precedent set by the Prophet, adhering to this authority amounted to obeying God.<sup>45</sup> The problem arose when the *Markaz-i-Millat* slipped into wrong hands and the spectre of dictatorship appeared on the horizon. The appropriation of power by these non-representative dictators severed the link between state and religious authority. Despite all their powers, these dictators could not force upon the Muslim community any aspect of Quranic interpretation or earn respect in matters of religious guidance. With the *Markaz-i-Millat* in disarray, the people resorted to individual scholars for answers to their queries. This was how the duality between state and religion arose in Islam. It had far reaching effects insofar as Islam became a 'religion' like many others in the world and lost its vitality as an all-encompassing *Din*. The state affairs were bifurcated along the distinct domains of spiritual and temporal. Hence, there emerged in Islam a priestly class of its own. This further undermined the unity of the Muslim community as every single scholar individually assumed the responsibility of interpreting the Quran, Islamic law and religious practices. As the state was excluded from undertaking this task, there was no viable authority that could arbitrate between varying interpretations offered by the Ulama. The vacuum was filled by Hadith collections as Ulama increasingly came to an understanding that an authentically verified statement of the Prophet was the most important source for determining the postulates of Islamic beliefs and practices. The jurisprudential rulings thus arrived at became applicable as codified law and have continued to be so since then.<sup>46</sup>

It was an insistence on the part of the Ulama for centuries to blindly imitate these jurisprudential findings that Parwez found most objectionable. His objections were based on his opinion that the 'mechanism' adopted by the jurists for establishing Islamic laws was faulty. He admitted that although they all worked in good faith and under the compulsions of their time, but Parwez maintained that in his opinion no single individual had the authority to impose his scholarly findings as accurate, unchanging and binding. These findings were even more problematic for Parwez because they were based on the principle that the Prophet offered the best mode of action and was the sole divinely inspired guide in matters of Quranic interpretation and articles of faith and

practice. Contrary to that, Parwez's proposed that the *Markaz-i-Millat* was not necessarily dependent on the Prophet or a learned jurist or exegete but a representative assemblage of Muslim community and its scholars which had the right to progressively interpret Quranic injunctions, amend various postulates of Islamic laws and suitably determine the mode of ritual observances.

Although Parwez acknowledged *Markaz-i-Millat's* right to propose changes in the mode of ritual observances, he maintained that there was more scope for *Markaz-i-Millat's* use of extensive powers of revision in matters relating to different aspects of law and not for the alteration of the established ritualistic practices as such. It was because while circumstantial changes provided fresh insights into the details of law and state-societal functions, the same did not hold true with regard to rituals. Regardless of the temporal and spatial settings, ritualistic modes could retain their relevance. But, at the same time, Parwez maintained that the prevalent schisms among the Muslims on the petty details of rituals was so detrimental for the realization of the larger aim of unity amid Muslim ranks that the *Markaz-i-Millat* would have to apply its authority to bring about uniformity among the Ummah and put an end to sectarian schisms.<sup>47</sup> Till the time that such a *Markaz-i-Millat* remained an elusive concept, Parwez allowed for the continuation of the established practices and did not condone many changes in it for the want of avoiding further divisions among the Muslims and needless religious controversies.<sup>48</sup>

By propounding such an idea, Parwez purportedly disallowed the applicability of *Markaz-i-Millat's* powers for a Chakralawi-like radical alteration of prevalent practices but he himself did not totally desist from doing the same—at least with regard to the theoretical aspects of these practices. This can be seen in Parwez's differentiated understanding of the Quranic term *Salat*. He defined *Salat* as the obedience of Divine dictates and commandments in every field and aspect of life. In a similar vein, he described *Iqamat-i-Salat* (normally understood as 'establishing the prayers') as establishment of such a system or society in which the individuals were enabled to 'perform' *Salat*. As such *Iqamat-i-Salat* was to be a continuous process pertaining to all the domains of individual and collective life. However, Parwez did admit that the Quran had also mentioned *Salat* in the sense it was normally understood.<sup>49</sup> This was when the Quran talked of the 'gatherings of *Salat*'. But it was just one subsidiary component of the whole *Salat* system and was meant to give voice to man's inner feelings and cater for the emotional component of his Self. The provision for such gatherings did not imply an endorsement of

formalism in rituals bordering on spiritless worship but rather was meant to further strengthen Man's resolve and commitment to *Iqamat-i-Salat*.<sup>50</sup> So even though Parwez was not proposing changes in the more formal or 'emotionally relevant' aspects of *Salat*, he was adding considerable new meanings to its whole concept which had direct bearings on its practice as well.

Other than *Salat*, Parwez's 'amendments' in the rest of Muslim practices were not merely theoretical but were quite a radical break from the past in practical details as well. This is best seen in his description of the Hajj. He followed the line exactly similar to that of Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari without acknowledging it.<sup>51</sup> He described the Hajj as a modern-day equivalent of United Nations in which Muslim delegates from all over the world assemble to discuss different issues. The 'Hajj schedule' specified by Parwez is as under: It begins with the 'training course' of Ramadan in which the people are physically and spiritually strengthened to withstand external pressures and challenges for the protection, continuation, and successful working of the Islamic system in the society. On the occasion of Eid—a celebration for the commemoration of Quran's revelation—delegates are chosen for representing the Nation during the Hajj 'proceedings'. The inaugural session of Hajj takes place in a large, open area known as Arafat where delegates are introduced to one another. At the same session, a report is submitted on last year's performances and proposals are floated for the future agenda. It is followed by three days of consultations. During this period, feasts are hosted and gifts exchanged to increase the cordiality between the delegates. With the purpose of not over burdening the hosts, the delegates are expected to make animal sacrifices to arrange for the food.<sup>52</sup> But Parwez was not dismissive of the ritualistic aspects of Hajj either. Like in the case of *Salat*, Parwez opined that Islam gave foremost importance to the practical utility of an act and was similarly cognizant of the need for emotional nurturing of its followers. This was why certain rituals had been retained for the 'Hajj Conference'. Dressing up in a white *ahnam*, unstitched sheets serves a message, loud and clear, in favour of the unity of all mankind and a resolve to establish peace and security in the whole world. Circumambulation around the Ka'ba is a reiteration of the resolve that Lord alone is the focal point of Man's life and that all efforts should be directed towards following His Commandments.<sup>53</sup>

Hence, it can be inferred from Parwez's writings that if revisions were to be planned in ritual observances and—hypothetically speaking—successfully implemented with acceptance from the whole of Muslim



community, no bar could be put on it since the rituals established by the Prophet were not divinely ordained and were only adopted after mutual consultations. This implied that Parwez wanted the prevalent practices to be kept largely intact not because they had a Divine sanction behind them but because he realized the impossibility of the Muslims being convinced of agreeing to any alternative form of ritual observances even after the revival of a *Markaz-i-Millat*.

In Parwez's conceptualization of Islam, the Din of Islam which encompassed a wide range of beliefs and activities did not entail anything that was essentially and completely immutable, nor was a fixation with the Isnad paradigm possible in the presence of a revived *Markaz-i-Millat* or *Khilafat 'ala Minhaj al-Nubuwwat*. There were, however, certain 'Permanent values'—mostly ethical-moral exhortations—and edicts clearly and most unambiguously stated in the Quran to which Parwez emphasized strict adherence. The proposed legislations, interpretations and amendments were proposed by him to take place within the contours specified by these permanent values. So while the Ulama included—in addition to the Quran—Hadith as a source of the permanent values and major repository of supposedly unchangeable aspects of laws, beliefs and practices, Parwez limited himself to accepting the authority of the Quran alone in dictating the permanent aspects of Islam and that too in terms of the values or principles it enjoined, and rarely in forms less unconstrained. Thus, Parwez's 'theory of state' and his concepts about its legislative powers and executive functions, entailed:

1. God alone is to be obeyed and not any human being. Even a Prophet cannot make anyone obey him.
2. The obedience to God is to be in accordance with set of rules codified in the Quran.
3. This obedience takes place within the parameters of a system (and not individually) whose first central authority is the [figure of the] Prophet. Obedience to this central authority is called the obedience of God and the Prophet. This is what the rule of God is.
4. Those commandments, for which even minute details have been specified by the Quran, cannot be amended by this central authority either. But those commandments, which in the Quran are touched upon in principle only, it has been purposely done that so as to make them amenable for change in matters of detail in accordance with the dictates of the circumstances. ...



5. The Caliphs of the Prophet replaces the Prophet of Allah. And hence the obedience to God and Prophet is carried out through obeying the authority of this new central authority.<sup>54</sup>

It was the establishment of an Islamic state in accordance with the above mentioned principles that occupied a central position in the overall scheme envisaged by Ghulam Ahmad Parwez for the revival of Muslim dominance in spheres of intellectual progress, spiritual growth, socio-economic justice and material welfare, and as the means for putting an end to sectarian differences among the Muslims. His proposed theoretical framework relegated extensive powers to the *Markaz-i-Millat* so that it could become possible for it to cater for both the material and the religio-spiritual-requirements of the individual and the community. The *Markaz-i-Millat*, among other tasks, was entrusted with the responsibility of establishing the Divine Order of socio-economic nurture by appropriating all the factors of production; amend Islamic laws in accordance to the demands of changing times; and bring about uniformity in Muslim observances of ritual practices. However, the endowment of such a wide range of powers for varied responsibilities and that, too, to a state whose obedience equalled that of God, did not result in an Islamic Leviathan state of sorts. It was because the idea of such a state was fine-tuned by Parwez to carry out the functions assigned to it in a continuously progressive vein and on the basis of mutual consultations. Also, even though Parwez professed to constrain the state and the individual under multiple wraps of Divine guidance, the intended consequence was to the contrary. The state, in actual execution of its vast authority and assigned functions, simply foregrounded the few vaguely worded permanent Islamic principles rather than being interned within their contours. What mitigated further the apprehensions of the emergence of an Islamic Leviathan was Parwez's emphasis on individual human action and scope for the use of rational faculties as the basis of Man-God relationship in Islam and hence, by extension, an integral feature of the Islamic state as well. Thus, even by apparently agreeing to the containment of the state and the individual within the precincts of Divine guidance, Parwez still managed to salvage a lot of ground for rational and autonomous human action.

Parwez's discourse on the outlines of a Quran-based system of state was initially in response to the discussion on an independent state for the Muslims in India during the late 1930s and 1940s. During this period, Parwez ardently championed the cause for the creation of Pakistan as he

saw in the establishment of an independent Muslim state the possibility of actualization of his own ideas regarding an Islamic state. After the creation of Pakistan, Parwez wrote even more extensively on matters of state and the role expected of the new rulers regarding the implementation of an Islamic system in Pakistan. In the following sections of the chapter, a detailed evaluation has been made of the policies adopted and the ideas held by the policy-makers of Pakistan during the years from 1947 to 1969. This period has been chosen for its distinct dissimilarity from the post-1970 decades of Pakistani politics in matters of politics relating to Islam. It was during this period when Parwez most actively pursued the cause of disseminating his own ideas by producing a prolific amount of literature and tried to establish his scholarly credentials among a select class mostly comprising of the young college graduates, professionals and others with a similar 'modern', non-traditional understanding of Islam. Parwez was also working for the recognition of himself and the *Idara Tulu'-i-Islam* by the 'power elites' as the only one among the scholars of Islam who wielded ideas that could usefully be employed for the establishment of an Islamic state along progressive lines. He was partially successful in his endeavours towards enhancement of his personal status and organizational gains. Some of his ideas on State—and that of many other like-minded scholars among his predecessors and contemporaries whose writings had shaped the religious worldview of the 'sceptical College graduates';<sup>55</sup> Western educated Muslim intelligentsia; professional classes and power elites—were reflected in the politics relating to Islam in Pakistan up to 1969. This included, most importantly, recognition of the distinction between *permanent* values of Islam and *mutability* of the detailed aspects so as to allow for dynamism in amendment of laws codified centuries ago. A necessary corollary of disregard for the jurisprudential contributions of the yesteryear scholars was the inadmissibility of Ulama's role in the functioning of the state and, especially, in the law-making process concerning a revisioning of different aspects of Islamic laws so as to forestall the dangers of Pakistan becoming a theocracy. This was in sharp contrast to the religious worldview of the Ulama who upheld the belief that legislation with regard to every aspect of life had already been recorded in the Quran and Sunnat. Even if there was to be a scope for any fresh legislation, it was expected by them that the whole process be subordinated to their overarching influence. The curtailment of such powers idealized by the Ulama was to be at the expense of an enlarged legislative authority for those running the state. In doing so the power elite of Pakistan was, perhaps, unknowingly being impressed by a

particular aspect of Ahl al-Qur'an thought, i.e. severance from the textual and religious authority of the past. This dissociation from the past allowed envisioning of a state with an avowed regard for Islamic values and its acceptance as the guiding principles for the ideological outlook of the state but exclusion, at the same time, of the Ulama from playing a role in the working of the state.

The following sections of the chapter would show how these ideas acquired from Parwez and other individuals—albeit in considerably modified forms and with different purposes—were found favourable to the working of the new state and hence developed through various organizational setups and institutional means supported by the power elites.

#### **6.6. POLITICS OF ISLAM IN PAKISTAN: DEBATES ON THEORETICAL ASPECTS DURING THE PERIOD 1947–1969**

The debate about the role of Islam and its applicability in the functioning of the state and regulating the affairs of the society pre-dates the creation of Pakistan. The 'slogan of Islam' had been used to rally the support of the Muslims for the creation of a new independent state which could serve the economic and religious interests of the Muslims of South Asia. The 'ideological' outlines of the proposed state, however, were obscure. The leaders of the Muslim League—especially Muhammad Ali Jinnah who spearheaded the Pakistan Movement—were bred in British parliamentary traditions and had little to contribute to the idea of an Islamic state. Most of Jinnah's associates, too, were drawn from the feudal aristocracy and did not have an interest in or experience of mass politics. It was one of the reasons why most of the Ulama kept themselves aloof from the Muslim League's campaign for Pakistan. Such stalwarts as Abul Kalam Azad and Husayn Ahmad Madani—the latter being the head of the influential Muslim seminary of Deoband—were supportive of Congress efforts against the British rule and did not give much importance to the status and standing of the Muslim League. With slight variations, same holds true for other individuals such as Abul 'Ala Maududi, 'Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari and 'Inayat Ullah Mashriqi. It was felt that the creation of a state comprising of Muslim-majority areas would be a pyrrhic achievement at the expense of Muslims of the United Provinces and would effectively dilute their significance and influence in those areas which were once the bastions of Muslim political and cultural authority in North India. While the likes of Maududi and Mashriqi did not shun the idea of converting

the whole of Hindustan into Pakistan by the means of a putsch inspired by the spirited cadres of their respective religio-political organizations, Azad and Madani did not find fault with the concept of composite nationalism as repugnant to Islam and were sure of the safety of Muslim rights, both political and religious, in an independent India with a substantial Hindu majority and a significant Muslim minority. These voices of dissent—usually tagged together as that of Nationalist Ulama<sup>56</sup>—were wary of Muslim League's claims of setting up an Islamic state as its leaders were accused of being non-observant of basic Islamic norms and practices and lacking in sufficient knowledge of Islam. It was only later that the Muslim League overcome this deficiency with the help of Shabbir Ahmad 'Usmani—another influential Deobandi cleric—who broke ranks with his fellow Ulama to launch a separate political platform in support of Muslim League's efforts for the creation of a new state.

In other postcolonial, Muslim-majority states, too, Islam had played a significant role in the anti-colonial struggle and mobilizing the people in national liberation movements. This can be seen most evidently in case of Indonesia and Egypt. But in both these countries Islam was not the basis for a distinct nationhood. In case of Indonesia, Islam had simultaneously the potential of threatening the national fabric of the state consisting of various ethnic and religious minorities sprawling over the archipelago, and also espousing the case for an expansive identity encapsulating other Muslim majority regions in South East Asia. Those entrusted with the task of drafting an ideological basis for the new state, however, reached a compromise by establishing the new state along religious but not Islamic lines.<sup>57</sup> In doing so they rejected the demands of Muslim groups in Indonesia asking for a more expressed and pronounced role for Islam in the constitution. Failing to achieve this goal, a militant struggle followed in some areas soon after the independence of Indonesia lasting till 1963. This helped reinforce the conviction of the power elite, especially the military, that the national unity of the country was imperilled by accommodating Islam within the state structure. Similarly, in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood had played a considerable part in fighting along with the Free Officers for overthrowing monarchy and freeing Egypt from the imperialistic yoke of Britain. Once the coup was successfully accomplished, the secular military elite came to have a suspicious view of the Brotherhood because of its radical religious orientations. In order to rein in such tendencies, there was a massive crackdown against the members of the Brotherhood. At the same time, the new regime moved to bring religious establishment under its control.

This was exemplified in such measures as nationalization of mosques by the Auqaf (religious endowments) department, policy of single Friday sermons for all the mosques, and streamlining of Al-Azhar's curriculum by adding to it new faculties for the study of Western sciences. However, Islam continued to determine the personal law of the Muslim subjects.<sup>58</sup> Hence, in both cases, Islam's potential as a legitimizing and rallying force for certain socio-political goals was realized and tapped by the power elites but they remained avowedly secular in their policy decisions and were not averse to pronouncing them in public either.

The case of Pakistan, however, is unique. Not only had Islam been the most important factor in rallying the support of the Muslims for the establishment of a separate state, it was also the only binding force or unifying factor in the newly formed multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state set apart by a distance of more than 1200 miles of hostile land. Hence, to say that Pakistan was conceived as a Muslim state catering for the economic rights of the Muslims, can at best be regarded as an academic interpretation of the events leading to the creation of Pakistan but not an exact reading of the policy options available to the power elites. The question, therefore, during this period of Pakistan's history, was not about the admissibility of the role of Islam in Pakistan but the *kind* of Islam to be established and the extent of its influence in the working of the state. This question can be heuristically labelled along the binaries of sacred/secular state and divine/human will to enumerate the opinions and ideas on the role of Islam in Pakistan during that period. A 'sacred state excluding human will'<sup>59</sup>—generally referred to as a theological state conceiving Shari'at as a closed system of religious doctrines—as demanded by various Ulama groups and political parties was never an option for it would have formalized the authority of the Ulama in the working of the state. Nor was the idea of a 'secular state excluding divine will'—a purely secular regime espousing regional nationalism or socialist ideology, as it was to be found in some Arab countries—feasible for Pakistan on the account of the multiplicities of ethnic identities in Pakistan and the aversion of Pakistani power elites, pooled from a socially narrow and aristocratic base, to Socialist ideas. What was implemented and promoted by the Pakistani power elite in the name of an Islamic state was an interface between the twin approaches of 'sacred state admitting human will' and 'secular state admitting sacred will'. In this regard the religious worldview of the Pakistani power elites—i.e. the rulers, bureaucrats, judges and the military officers, collectively relegated to an entity named as the 'Pakistani establishment'—was shaped by the discourse of Islamic



Modernism which had been developing in South Asian Islam and elsewhere since the late nineteenth century. Such an understanding of Islam allowed the envisioning of a State in which—at least theoretically—democracy, rights of minorities; sovereignty of the parliament; and flexibility of Islamic laws could be propagated as the guiding principles of the state. Hence, the shaping of state by the power elites in line with the discourse of Islamic Modernism was not only to fulfil their vested interests of precluding the Ulama from the state structure thus preventing Pakistan from being run on a reified tradition of Islam and forging an Islam-based national identity to subdue the centrifugal pull of ethnic sub-nationalisms, but also for actualizing their own religious ideals. Therefore it has been hypothesized in this chapter that the power elites in Pakistan were, predominantly, neither avowedly secularists nor did they think that the state patterned by their policies was going to be a purely secular state. It was not insignificant, then, that the newly built capital for Pakistan was named as 'Islamabad'.

It has also been argued in this part of the chapter that the power elites aspired for an *ideal* of Islamic state. As Wilfred Cantwell Smith remarked, in the context of Pakistan that 'an *actual* Islamic state is a state that its Muslim people are trying to make *ideally* Islamic. An *ideal* Islamic state is a state that its Muslims consider to be good.'<sup>60</sup> As far as the power elites were concerned, they were moulding Pakistan into an *ideally* Islamic state.<sup>61</sup> It is just that the ideal was inspired by Islamic Modernism which allowed considerable space for such notions as relative secularity of the state, dynamism of Islamic laws and legislative authority of the Parliament among many other things. In doing so they were never completely successful and only partially dominant. On many occasions they had to go against their own proclivities by yielding to the pressure tactics of the Ulama or adopt policies that could convince the population that the state was being *ideally* Islamic.<sup>62</sup> Taking into consideration these factors, the history of Pakistan cannot be periodized between an unrestrained pendulum swing, initially, in favour of 'secularism' and, later, towards 'Islamization'. Rather, the history of Islam's role in the Pakistani state during this period should be elaborated under the term 'politics of Islam' which has considerable flexibility to incorporate within its ambit such issues as disputative negotiation of contrasting religious traditions; sectional interests and ideological worldview of key actors; and the imperatives of populist decision-making. It is the interplay of such variables and their relative strengths and weakness during different sets of



socio-political, economic and, even, geostrategic compulsions that has determined the varying degrees of Islam's role in the state of Pakistan.

In order to substantiate these hypotheses and understand the dialects of the debate on Islam in Pakistan and the politics of Islam that followed the creation of Pakistan, it is important to describe the category of Pakistani power elites in detail and connect their ideological ancestry with the discourse of Islamic modernism. The later part of the chapter would highlight those policy statements, legislative measures, judicial decisions and institutional measures which support the hypothesis that there was a concerted effort on the part of the Pakistani power elites to shape the nascent state in accordance with their religious worldviews.

### 6.7. PAKISTANI POWER ELITES AND THEIR VISION OF ISLAMIC MODERNISM

A detailed study of the 'Pakistani Establishment'—especially for the period immediately following the creation of Pakistan—is lacking. It has been taken for granted that Pakistan, since its inception, has been under the dominion of a select clique of big landowners, senior military and civil bureaucrats and major industrial houses. While the political observers are correct in their reading of the elitist state structure of Pakistan, there remains the need for a substantiated study of those at the helm of the affairs in order to develop a better understanding of the complexities and processes involved in determining the course of state policy towards different issues. Instead of such a comprehensive study, only a few generalized interpretations have been offered. For example, Khalid B. Sayeed has simply defined the power elites of the nascent state of Pakistan as originating from middleclass professional groups like lawyers and civil servants, merchant and capitalists, and big landowners of mostly, Punjab and Sindh.<sup>63</sup> Muhammad Waseem's 'structuralist approach' is more thorough but lacks the support of an extensive empirical data on the class origins of the power elites.<sup>64</sup> This gap is partially filled by Asaf Hussain's *Elite Politics in an Ideological State: The Case of Pakistan*, which is a specialized study of the elite groups operating in Pakistan. It tabulates relative shares of landed, bureaucratic, religious, industrial, professional and military elites in the power structure of Pakistan's polity<sup>65</sup> but does not greatly concern itself with the ideological makeup of various elite groups, nor does it establish their connection with the policies of state pursued by them. Shirin Tahir-Kheli has simply defined the Pakistani political elite as comprising of 'those men who had been thrust into power

by virtue of their pre-independence activities.' They were the key members of Muslim League and had worked specifically for the creation of Pakistan.<sup>66</sup> According to her, the political elite was the only 'real' elite in Pakistan in 1947, and it was only after a few years that it was supplemented with the power of bureaucratic elite. The importance of the latter can be gauged from the fact that they were involved not only in the process of policy-making but were also instrumental in implementing this policy.<sup>67</sup> In 1954, the military elite's incorporation into the coterie of power elite structure was formalized with the induction of commander-in-chief of Pakistan armed forces General Ayub Khan into the Cabinet.<sup>68</sup> The instability of the political regime due to the unrepresentative character of its mandate and lack of democratic institutionalization, made way for Ayub Khan to scrap altogether the rudiments of a democratic polity in Pakistan and impose Martial Law in 1958. His reign, which lasted till 1969, is regarded as the high point of the military-bureaucratic nexus.

Jamal Malik's coinage of the category named Colonial Urban Sector (CUS) is most helpful in situating the socio-economic contours of the concerned players. As described by Malik, the CUS consists of: 'representatives of the (colonial) state, especially of large trade associations, representatives of government, the higher grades of bureaucracy, the police and the army, professionals and the self-employed, the intelligentsia and the higher formal sector of education.'

The agriculturalist elite has been categorized by him separately.<sup>69</sup> This helps explain the role of non-traditional, modern and elitist institutions like Atchison College, Sandhurst, Aligarh College, and Government College Lahore in shaping the religious and western-liberal worldview of the power elites. It is from these institutions of modern learning that most members of the power elites have received their education. A considerable majority of the senior bureaucrats, military officers and powerful landlords share these similar educational backgrounds. In this context, the ideological makeup of these power elites can best be described in the words of Wilfred Cantwell Smith as that of a modernized Muslim bourgeoisie who maintain: 'a generalized and sometimes profound allegiance to a somewhat undefined Islam, and an operative and sometimes fiery sentiment of cohesion with the Muslim community.'<sup>70</sup>

What Smith has referred to as an 'undefined Islam' can be understood and elaborated within the discourse of Islamic Modernism impinging upon the religious worldview of these modernized Muslim bourgeoisie who later became the power elites of Pakistan.<sup>71</sup> How the discursive tradition which developed with Islamic Modernism was foregrounded by

the power elites in their policies regarding Islam in Pakistan can be highlighted by alluding to a number of sources dating back to that period.

### 6.8. RELATING ISLAMIC MODERNISM TO PAKISTANI POWER ELITES

To begin with, the link between the ideas espoused by various Islamic Modernists and critics of reified Islamic traditions and the religious worldview of the Pakistani power elite can be amply corroborated by citing references from their own statements and writings. Statements to these effects were made at different forums by individuals of significant governmental authority and observations noted in several important judicial reports, commissions and decisions. Jinnah, the founder of the new state, expressed his solemn belief—a few months before his death: 'Salvation lies in following the golden rules of conduct set for us by our great law-giver, the Prophet of Islam. Let us lay the foundations of our democracy on the basis of truly Islamic ideals and principles.'<sup>72</sup>

Liaquat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, stated in unequivocal terms that theocracy or a government by priests was an idea alien to Islam and that using this term for the future polity of Pakistan was an act of mischievous propaganda.<sup>73</sup> Speaking at the occasion of All-Pakistan Political Conference held in 1949 in the Punjab University, Abdur Rab Nishtar—the Governor of Punjab—spoke of the 'basic guiding principles' of the Quran and Hadith and the provision for elaboration of laws and policies in conformity with these principles.<sup>74</sup> As Prime Minister of Pakistan Khwaja Nazimuddin (1951–53) emphatically asserted:

The principles enunciated by Islam had to be interpreted in terms of the democratic constitutional practice of the twentieth century ...so that we could bring about a synthesis not only of the fundamental teachings of our faith and the requirements of progressive democracy but also of the requirements of the twentieth century and best elements in our own tradition and history.<sup>75</sup>

There is, then, little wonder that the legislative measures adopted and constitutional schemes proposed during this period were reflective of the ideas highlighted above. The passage of 1949 Objectives Resolution was one such example when Pakistan was effectively declared an Islamic state exercising authority delegated to it by Allah through the people of Pakistan. But the state—as visualized in the Resolution, which has served

as a preamble for the successive constitutions of Pakistan—did not envision any special authority for the Ulama, nor accord recognition to their possible role in the actualization of Resolution's provisions. What piqued certain quarters of the Ulama even further were parts of the Objectives Resolution which 'over-emphasized' the need for democratic polity and protection of minority rights.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, for the drafters of the Resolution and members of the power elite steeped in the traditions of Western liberalism, the Objectives Resolution was no more than a vaguely pious statement without any substantial consequences for the political setup of the country. In their opinion: 'By acknowledging God's sovereignty the 'Objectives Resolution' recognized the authority of the people as derived from God and delegated by the people to the Constituent Assembly with the purpose of making a Constitution for the sovereign state of Pakistan.'<sup>77</sup>

Hence, by the time the first Constitution of Pakistan was drafted in 1956, the power elite had allowed only for a ceremonial adornment of the constitution with Islamic principles and the acceptance of some token demands of the Islamic parties like designating the state an Islamic Republic. The recommendations made by the Objectives Resolution, Board of Ta'limat-i Islamiyya (Board of Islamic Teachings) and the Basic Principles Committee found little, if any, place in the Constitution. Islam was not declared or mentioned as the official religion of the state and the National Assembly speaker, who was to assume the office of presidency in the absence of the latter for whatever reason, was not required to be a Muslim.<sup>78</sup> A so-called repugnancy clause was enshrined in the 1956 and later constitutions stipulating that all laws repugnant to Quran and Sunnat were to be repealed.<sup>79</sup> However, this did not lead to a large-scale revisioning of the existing laws, nor was the claim of the Ulama as the repositories of Islamic knowledge to arbitrate on the relative 'Islamicity' of laws accepted.<sup>80</sup> Even when changes were proposed in the existing laws, the opportunity was used to undermine the authority of Ulama by ignoring the traditional reading and understanding of Quranic edicts; enlarging the scope of legislative powers; and providing legal relief where it was hitherto wanting in the traditionally practiced Islamic law.<sup>81</sup>

This much trumpeted emphasis on the want of dynamism in the field of Islamic law was disputed by Maulana Maududi in 1958. He was responding to a statement by S.A. Rahman—who at that time was serving as Judge of Supreme Court, West Pakistan—that the field of fresh legislation was wide open and that the classical jurisprudential compendiums needed to be updated, albeit in line with the 'permanent

values' specified by the Quran, so as to make them compatible with the challenges and demands of the modern world.<sup>82</sup> Rahman, as head of the commission set up in 1958 for law reforms and even otherwise, had stood for the vindication of majority of population's preference for embodiment of Islamic principles in law and constitution.<sup>83</sup> It was only that he wanted the task to be entrusted to chosen representatives instead of Ulama so as to leave the room open for new legislation and reinterpretation of the old ones. He echoed Aslam Jayrapuri in asserting that in matters of ritual practices the Sunnat has been continuous, definite and, hence, binding but for the rest one needs to be dependent on Hadith which is a less credible source and requires authentication on the basis of content analysis. Maududi's response was a succinct rejoinder to the oft repeated modernist argument in favour of fresh legislation and reformation of existing laws: he argued that the Prophet was not simply a priest who dictated certain values of permanence he but was mandated with the task of setting up an Islamic Order based wholly on divine principles. The laws introduced for this purpose and the mode of their practice, interpretation and implementation had come down to the Muslims in the form of Hadith and Sunnat.<sup>84</sup>

The members of the superior judiciary, however, were convinced in their distrust of the Hadith literature. The famous Munir Report—a probe into the Punjab disturbances of 1953 resulting from aggressive agitation in order to declare Ahmadis as non-Muslims—expressed its reservation about the authenticity of Hadith literature and its authority to determine the legal code.<sup>85</sup> The report, probably inadvertently, reiterated Chiragh Ali's viewpoint on the role and status of Hadith by questioning sceptically whether the: 'instructions given by the Prophet with reference to local conditions should necessarily be followed literally in countries regardless of the local customs to which people of these countries have all along been accustomed to, or, only the principles have to be adopted.'<sup>86</sup>

The report was extremely critical of the idea of mixing state with religion and the role of Ulama in politics, and came closest to being the most important official document in Pakistan's legal and judicial history to propose almost a secular principles of state without mincing many words. A continuation of similar trends is to be seen in an important decision delivered by Justice Shafi in 1960. The judgment rewards, in contravention to the traditional stipulation of Fiqh, custody of children to a widow who had remarried. In his detailed views on the sources of Islamic law and possibilities of their reinterpretation, the Judge claimed



for himself the right to interpret the 'permanent values' of Islam and the laws derived therein. He maintained the view that if Abu Hanifa had the right to interpret the Quran without the assistance of traditions and in the light of the existing circumstances, then the same could not be denied to other Muslims. Such blind adherence to the authority of the grand masters of yesteryears was to lead to stagnation in thought and deprive Islam of its status as a dynamic, universal religion.<sup>87</sup> He was further of the view that: 'The exegesis of the Quran should be developed by judges as well as by the chosen representatives of the people by a subtle method of reasoning and analogy in the light of the given facts.'<sup>88</sup> The observations made by the judge about the historicity of Hadith literature and the 'objectionable' content of some its narrations, was not so dissimilar from that of *Tulu'-i-Islam*. He was especially critical of those traditions relating to the wives of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which disclose in a 'naked manner' the private discourses between them and the Prophet.<sup>89</sup> Such attitudes towards 'authentic' collections of Hadith and ideas regarding the role of the nascent state in the amendment of Islamic law, were translated into concrete measures as the power elites adopted a conscious policy of promoting, what it considered to be, a rationalist and modernist interpretation of Islam and curtailment of obscurantist forces.

## 6.9. INSTITUTING ISLAMIC MODERNISM

In order to achieve the purpose of establishing Islamic Modernism as an undisputed influence in determining the role of Islam in Pakistani state, institutional arrangements were made and number of individuals sponsored to disseminate literature laced with such ideas. The Institute for the Reconstruction of Islam set up by the government of Punjab a few months after the creation of Pakistan was one such institute. It was headed by Muhammad Asad (Leopold Weiss), an Austrian Jewish convert to Islam, with Nazir Niyazi acting as its assistant director. During the brief period for which this institute remained in existence, Muhammad Asad came up with some tracts in which he elaborated the concept of an Islamic state. He put forward the view that no specific form of government had been prescribed by Islam and it was up to the Muslims of every age to agree on one that suits their conditions. However, any such state must be based on the principle of mutual consultations and embody some essential Islamic ideals such as supremacy of the Quran and Sunnat; socio-economic justice; universal suffrage; and the right to dissent and permission to form political parties.<sup>90</sup>



Around that time an Iqbal Academy was also established in 1950 which was entrusted with the task of promoting the philosophy of 'Allama Muhammad Iqbal and to project him as the poet-philosopher of Pakistan. The first monograph published by this academy was written by Khalifa Abdul Hakim and its title was *Iqbal aur Mulla* (Iqbal and Mulla). The main thrust of the tract was to portray Iqbal as a champion of progressive Islam at odds with the stagnant theological approach of the Mulla (religious figure).<sup>91</sup> Of more significance was the Idara Saqafat-i-Islamiyya (Institute for Islamic Culture) which was established in 1954 in Lahore and was largely due to the efforts of Khalifa Abdul Hakim who prevailed upon his old time friend from the days of his service in the princely state of Hyderabad—the then Governor General Ghulam Muhammad—to allocate funds and land for establishing an institute that could 'popularize a modernist interpretation of Islam and counteract extreme rightist and fundamentalist forces.'<sup>92</sup> The assigned task required a reappraisal of the centuries old jurisprudential codifications and the right of the legislature to amend them or draft wholly new ones more suitable for modern times. For this purpose, Khalifa Abdul Hakim—like many other modernist thinkers of Islam in South Asia, especially Ghulam Ahmad Parwez—resorted to distinguishing the Permanent and Impermanent values of Islam. According to it, the permanent laws of Islam as prescribed in the Quran were not more than ten pages. The rest were Permanent values and broad principles in the light of which laws were to be drafted. While these values and principles were permanent, the laws drafted within the precincts demarcated by them remained subject to revision to cope with the dictates of changing times. Khalifa, while elaborating on the Islamic Ideology extending to social, political, economic, and legislative domains of societal life and state activities, observed:

Essentials of legislation shall be derived from the basic principles of the Quran and the practice followed by the Prophet; otherwise almost the entire field of legislation shall be left unhampered, to be moulded as circumstances demand by men of knowledge....Such is the theocracy of Islam which is not to be identified with any theocracy that ever existed. Call it a theocracy or call it a secular state as you please: it synthesizes the virtues of both repudiating the evils with which they often get contaminated.<sup>93</sup>

A debate on the extensive powers of the legislature necessarily involved a discussion on the role and significance of Hadith. This came about because these institutions were limiting themselves to stating that only the laws of the Quran are eternal and did not take into consideration the fact

that bulk of the Islamic laws are derived from the jurisprudentially relevant sayings and arbitrations of the Prophet, and their later incorporation in Hadith collections and codification in the books of Fiqh. It may not have been possible for the Institute for Islamic Culture to outrightly defend with the view of Ahl al-Qur'an in ascribing a temporal status to the juristic interpretation of Islam or to discard, at least, Sunnat as a source of guidance in the affairs of state and individual belief and practice. The status of Hadith literature was, however, taken to be as of doubtful origin and significance. Khalifa's view over Hadith was: 'This is a very uncertain and amorphous source since verbal transmissions through six or more generations, distorted by ignorance, prejudice, vested interests and factional strife, cannot serve as sure guides.'<sup>94</sup> The policy of the Institute with regard to the concept of modern state's legislative authority, and especially to the status of Hadith is evidenced by the inclusion of Khwaja 'Ibad Ullah Akhtar and Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi—both with varying degrees of affiliation with the Ahl al-Qur'an version of Islam—in the Institute and the publication of their works. They were among the first research fellows—among others that had either madrasa training or were college graduates—who were inducted into the institute,<sup>95</sup> and had a religious and academic outlook that carried forward the idea of a fresh enquiry into the Islamic law limiting the role of the Ulama in interpretations of Islam texts; and avoiding an overdosed confluence of state and religion.

The published works of these research fellows were also indicative of the intellectual outlook of the institute itself and the spirit of free enquiry it sought to encourage among the intelligentsia interested in the discourse on Islam. As the editor of *Al-Bayan*, Khwaja 'Ibad Ullah Akhtar had suggested a broad range of powers to state and justified legislation in those aspects of Islamic law settled by the Prophet and later day jurists. According to him, the delegation of these extensive legislative powers stemmed from the idea that the Shari'at of Islam was not static, fixed, or defined. No man's findings or dictates—no matter how respected his designation may be or widely recognized his astuteness as a scholar had been—could be put forward as immutable law. It rested exclusively with the appointed and representative government of the Muslims to give shape to Islamic laws and rules. In doing so the consultative assembly could benefit from a variety of sources including personal judgments of learned scholars and those of the Prophet as recorded in the form of Hadith but arrived at after a process of consultation with his Companions and considerations of the prevailing circumstances. The judgments so made

may have had a binding obligation during the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but now with an assembly in place, the previous obligations under law could be put to revisioning by members of the assembly.<sup>96</sup> In one of the books published by Idara Saqafat-i-Islamiyya, 'Ibad Ullah Akhtar claimed that *al-Kitab* (The Book)—an appellation usually understood as referring to the Quran—was actually a reference to the Book of Nature. He described the Quran as an elucidation of this Book of Nature and not the Book itself because there could be a degree of scepticism in every Holy Book including the Quran but not in the Book of Nature.<sup>97</sup> Writings like these and the fact that Khwaja 'Ibad Ullah Akhtar had been a known member of Ahl al-Qur'an—even though he had later developed differences with *Al-Bayan* due to his views on the issue of the number of daily prayers and fasts during the month of Ramazan—served to reinforce Ulama's misgivings regarding the working of Idara Saqafat-i-Islamiyya.

Equally, or even more, provocative for the Ulama were the works of Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi published by the Institute. In his numerous monographs and tracts for the Institute, he supported the discourse of Islamic Modernism. These included reforms in the marriage laws; introduction of family planning techniques; and continuation of interest free banking. His own proposals for reforms in the marriage law appeared before the setting up of a Marriage Commission in 1955. In that, Ja'far Shah proposed to curb polygamy and streamlining of divorce procedure by setting up arbitration councils.<sup>98</sup> The underlying argument was that the provision for polygamy was a conditional one and the state had the authority to put suitable constraints on its practice.<sup>99</sup> As for the problem of interest and the banking system, Ja'far Shah contributed to a discussion in *Saqafat*—a journal published by the Institute for Islamic Culture to debate various issues of societal and state concerns—in which a retired government official had asked whether the interest received by him in the form of provident fund and monthly pension comes under the category strictly forbidden in Islam. In his response, Ja'far Shah opined that the term *Riba* employed by the Quran was translatable as 'Usury' and not 'Interest'.<sup>100</sup> There was no doubt in his mind that Usury was absolutely prohibited but certain forms of Interest—like commercial interest which in its modern form is quite different from what was prevalent during the Prophet's lifetime—were permissible.<sup>101</sup>

Such musings on the part of Ahl al-Qur'an scholars were not necessarily compelled by their association with Idara Saqafat-i-Islamiyya but came to them naturally as well. It was because denunciation or, at least, undermining of past authorities as arbiters in matters of law and its

interpretation was common to all the Ahl al-Qur'an scholars. Therefore, even when some Ahl al-Qur'an scholars were not part of state-run institutes, their writings in individual capacities were no different from those affiliated with Idara Saqafat-i-Islamiyya and, hence, were relevant to the ongoing debate on state-Islam relationship in Pakistan. The best example in this regard is that of Tamanna 'Imadi who, after Partition (1947) had migrated to East Pakistan. He allowed for considerable powers to the ruling authority in its worldly dealings. According to him, there was ample room for modification in practice and alteration in law to accommodate changes that had taken place over a period of time rendering it difficult for previously established norms or rules to be applicable. He did not find any fault with non-scholars running the administration of the state and legislating for it instead of men with more specialized knowledge of Islam. According to him a King was appointed in the life of Prophet Samuel as reported in the Quran as well. The appointed King could never have matched the knowledge of the Prophet in matters of religion. The fact that he was still preferred over a Prophet for running of state affairs signified that those less qualified as scholars of religion but experienced in managing the politico-administrative affairs of the country had every right to rule over the country and their doing so could not be considered an un-Islamic practice.<sup>102</sup> 'Imadi held the view that it was among the duties of the Caliph or the ruler to ensure that the principles of Islam and those postulates of law which had been established by the Quran and the continuous practice of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were implemented and no digression allowed to take place. Anything found to be incongruent with Quranic teachings or its explicit ruling could be put to scrutiny. For the works of the earlier learned jurists, revision could be made of those aspects of law which were found not to be keeping pace with the dictates of modern age.<sup>103</sup> In doing so, 'Imadi even granted to the ruling authority the right to pursue a methodological framework, as deemed appropriate by it, to arrive at those principles and practices which were implemented by the Prophet and later by the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

#### **6.10. AYUB KHAN'S VISION OF ISLAM AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN PAKISTAN, 1958–1969**

The period of Ayub Khan's rule (1958–69) provides the best example of the Pakistani power elite's calculated policies to push through certain reforms, quarantine the influence of Ulama and instil a self-conceived

vision of modernistic and rationalistic Islam among the people. To begin with, Ayub Khan—like many other like-minded members of the power elites, especially in the military—believed in Islam as a progressive, egalitarian, and dynamic force whose real spirit was wanting among the Muslims of the day because it had slipped into the hands of regressive Mullahs. In order to dwarf all the aristocratic, capitalist and theological forces of regression, Ayub proposed—even before he had overthrown the government—building up of political, social and economic institutions of Pakistan on the principles of the Holy Quran.<sup>104</sup> Such framing of the institutions was not to result in retrogression as the task was to be entrusted to the intelligence of the chosen representatives of the people, and also because Ayub's own concept of an Islamic state was not so dissimilar from that of Khalifa Abdul Hakim or Muhammad Asad. He believed that the Quran did not ordain a specific constitution for an Islamic state and that it was left open to the Rightly Guided caliphs after the death of the Prophet to run the affairs of state in their understanding of Islamic principles in a particular situation. In his own words: 'The conclusion was inescapable that Islam had not prescribed any particular pattern of government but had left it to the community to evolve its own pattern to suit its circumstances, provided that the principles of the Quran and the Sunnat were observed.'<sup>105</sup> Unlike others, however, Ayub did not shirk from expressing the mutability of rules and regulations derivable directly from the Quran. In a letter to Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, he wrote:

If we want to re-establish free enquiry without which no progress is possible, then I can't see how you can avoid coming to a conclusion that *even in the Quran while respecting the principles, matters that relate to rules and regulations should be subject to adjustment in accordance with the circumstances of the time.* Unless this happens, I do not foresee any future for Muslims in this new world.<sup>106</sup>

Even for a radically revisionist Islamic thinker like Parwez, it was difficult to accept Ayub's thesis. He interpreted the latter's statement as suggesting that the meanings of the Quran should be considered anew in the light of prevailing circumstances. Thus, he responded that the phrase cannot possibly mean that the Quran should be compartmentalized as being partly immutable; partly redundant; and partly alterable.<sup>107</sup> Still, Ayub reposed his faith in what he vaguely understood as principles of an *ideally* Islamic state. But it was not lost upon him that the mere name of Islam could not create a progressive nationhood. This task required provision



of 'viable new content' in order to address social policies and legal problems. Ayub was of the understanding that if this viable new content could be *successfully supplied and accepted*, Islam could not only become a real cementing bond among Pakistanis, but could unleash a vast potential of energy for progress, but that if it either could not be supplied or could not be accepted, Islam as state-basis could become a disaster.<sup>108</sup> He pinned the success of these efforts on those educated in western style colleges but who subscribed wholeheartedly to Islam and believed in the building of Pakistan into a strong and dynamic state. The role of Ulama in this process was less desirable for him on account of his own perception of their failure to grasp the realities, compulsions, and problems of the modern age. He believed that Ulama were less interested in extending a helping hand to the course of the establishment of an *ideally* Islamic state in Pakistan and more in regaining the position of strength and influence that they had lost out to the educated classes—disowned by them as heretics for taking to Western ways—since the advent of British rule.<sup>109</sup>

For the purpose of an effective utilization of Islam for national cohesion and progressive societal outlook, Ayub Khan pushed through the agenda of social reform in the name of liberal interpretation of Islam, discouraged symbolic invocation of religion as part of domestic or foreign policy and adopted a hard line towards the Ulama—who offered not just religious but political opposition as well—to the extent of resorting to violent repression of their activities or covert use of state resources to limit or 'reform' their role in the society.<sup>110</sup> One of the earliest measures adopted by Ayub in this direction was the promulgation of the West Pakistan Waqf Properties Ordinance in 1959 which gave the government the power to gain control and management of shrines, mosques and other properties dedicated for religious purposes.<sup>111</sup> This nationalization of private Auqaf, for which Ayub was spurred into action by the writing of Javed Iqbal, was suggestive of curbing the powers of the *pirs* (Sufi leader) and *sajjada nishins* (heirs of the Sufi leadership),<sup>112</sup> and facilitated his regime's three cherished goals of a strong central government, economic development and modernization of religious institutions. The Auqaf department became instrumental in training the Ulama as Imams (prayer-leaders) for several mosques and shrines of significant religious import and spiritual authority. It also ensured the Ulama to be subjects of state patronage and it was consequently expected that they should receive basic 'worldly knowledge' in order to qualify for appointment at those religious sites managed or controlled by the state.<sup>113</sup> Besides, Ayub perfected the policy of institutionalized dissemination of his preferred vision of Islamic



Modernism and encouraged and supported those among the religious circles that came close to sharing his ideas. In pursuance of the former agenda, he appointed Fazlur Rahman in 1962 as Director of the newly established Central Institute of Islamic Research. As for the latter part of the strategy, Ayub developed a special nexus with Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, who in turn supported the regime and its policies wholeheartedly.

In the following sections of the chapter, an attempt has been made to detail upon the policies of Ayub Khan to use Islam as a source for progressive and cohesive nationhood. These included introducing liberal reforms in Islamic law and extending support to institutions and like-minded individuals with the purpose of promoting a discursive space for Islamic Modernism in opposition to that of the reified Islamic traditions. It will be displayed that this strategy reached its peak in 1967 when a major effort was made to promulgate the supremacy of Islamic Modernism over the 'Mullahs'.

### 6.11. LIBERALIZING ISLAMIC LAWS IN THE NAME OF SOCIAL REFORM: THE FAMILY LAWS OF 1961

The promulgation of the Family Laws in 1961 offers the most important example in which the power elite bypassed the authority of Ulama and appropriated for itself, albeit briefly, the right to legislate in matters of private law; hence, encroaching upon the domain which had been held exclusively by the Ulama even during the British period. In the post-1971 period, and especially during General Ziaul Haq's era, the situation was reversed and the Ulama regained their position in dictating the terms of Islam-specific laws.

The issue of reform in the family laws to the benefit of the women had been raised in British India as well where it had become exceedingly difficult for women to seek divorce from their husbands, or to claim child custody and maintenance allowance in case a divorce was granted. The disempowerment of the women from initiating divorce proceedings had given rise to sporadic cases, mostly in Punjab, where women would become apostates in order to fulfil the condition for one possible way of divorce according to the Hanafi law. Alarmed by this situation, a notable scholar Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi allowed for the application of Maliki law—even though such interchange of Fiqh is normally *never* allowed by the Ulama—so as to ease the difficulties of women by allowing them the right to initiate divorce proceedings.<sup>114</sup> The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, incorporating these recommendations, was passed in 1939.

The question of women's rights and reforms in family laws became a central issue of concern after independence.<sup>115</sup> What brought it to the focus of a larger public attention was the event of the then Prime Minister Muhammad Ali's second marriage to his personal secretary and the reaction on the part of women's groups that followed.<sup>116</sup> The outcry raised by these groups forced the government to appoint a commission for proposing suitable reforms in the Muslim personal law. The Marriage Commission thus appointed comprised of Chief Justice Abdur Rashid, Begum Shah Nawaz, Begum Anwar G. Ahmad, Begum Shams, Khalifa Abdul Hakim, Inayat-ur-Rahman and Ehtasham-ul-Haq Thanawi.<sup>117</sup> The commission prepared its report in the light of the responses by different religious groups and individuals to a questionnaire sent out by the commission. The recommendations of the commissions were largely those which had already been offered by Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi and published by the *Idara Saqafat-i-Islamiyya*. It called for divorce rights and maintenance allowance for women and suitable limitations of the practice of polygamy. The argument was a repetition of that of Khalifa Abdul Hakim in support of mutability of non-Quranic laws. Accordingly, the report of the Marriage Commission stated that definite laws and regulations prescribed by the Quran do not exceed a few pages. By stating this position on Islamic law, it was tacitly being implied—much in consonance with the ideas of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez—that the Sunnat was not a binding source of authority. The report said that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not fix rules and laws on purpose so as to avoid their incompatibility with the conditions of later times. His immediate followers made use of their rational faculties within the limits prescribed by the Quran and Sunnat to tackle with newly emerging issues.<sup>118</sup> Hence, by invoking the 'progressive' and 'liberatory' spirit of Islam at the expense of classical compendiums of law and stipulations of Hadith collections, the scope for changes in Muslim personal law was justified.

The proposals submitted by the Marriage Commission were not immediately translated into legal reforms due to the opposition made by the Ulama and political instability in the country. However, with the advent of Martial Law and the reformist agenda promised by the Martial Law administrator General Ayub Khan, rekindled the spirited efforts of women's groups to get the recommendations of the Marriage Commission implemented. These efforts came to fruition in 1961 when the Family Laws Ordinance was issued. The provisions of the Ordinance 'rationalized' polygamy; provided for the registration of marriage and divorce; secured maintenance rights for women; and awarded a compulsory share in the

inheritance to the children of a pre-deceased son or daughter. The Ordinance was an improvement on the Muslim Marriage Dissolution Act 1939 which had allowed women to initiate divorce proceedings and enhanced the chances of securing the custody of their children,<sup>119</sup> and also amended the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 (famously known as the Sarda Bill) by raising the legal age for marriage from 14 to 16 years for females and from 18 to 21 years for males.<sup>120</sup>

The Ordinance, its provisions and promulgation resulted in giving it different meanings to its votaries and also to its opponents. Such issues, as the abolition of child marriages and orphaned grandchildren's right to property had long been demanded by the Islamic modernists and the *Ahl al-Qur'an*. The fulfilment of the latter demand, especially, was clearly an affirmation of the stance taken by Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari and later supported by Aslam Jayrajpuri and Ghulam Ahmad Parwez. Insofar as the Ordinance encroached upon the Ulama's right to interpret Islamic laws, it was a reflection of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez's ideas for severing the duality between the temporal and religious compartmentalization of state structure.<sup>121</sup> As far as Ayub Khan was concerned, the promulgation of the Ordinance, despite severe opposition, impressed upon the minds of its targeted audience of the Ulama a visible imprint of the policies regarding Islam that he wanted to pursue. What was equally important for him was the rationale whereby these changes in Islamic law were being enforced at the expense of ignoring the traditional practices in prevalence. Perhaps for the first time in Pakistan such an argument had been employed in a piece of legislation favouring changes in the structure of family laws, and that too by a legal team whose knowledge of Islam, certainly, did not exceed that of the trained experts in that field. It was, hence, not just a question of ameliorating the social conditions of the women but also an attempt to exclude the Ulama and disfranchise them from—what they regarded as their exclusive and privileged domain—dictating the scripts of Islam-specific laws. Thus the right to legislate and reform could be claimed in the name of Islam without fostering the impression that it was being done under pressure from religious forces, or that the prior approval of them was a prerequisite when it came to dealing with Islam in any manner.

In opposition, the Ulama—despite the fact that they issued a joint statement in the condemnation of these laws—had different approaches towards the Islamic credentials of the reforms introduced and amendments required to rectify its aberrations. They objected to making the registration of marriages compulsory and the imposition of fine in case of non-

compliance. The pre-emption of second marriage by involving the local administration was unanimously considered by them as an appendix to Islamic laws. Instead of putting restrictions on man's supposedly unfettered right to marry more than one wife, the Ulama proposed judicial safeguards for the aggrieved wife and involvement of judiciary to settle matters in her favour. Child marriages were not disallowed by them on the account of their preferred reading of a particular Quranic verse condoning marrying off non-menstruating girls.<sup>122</sup> With regard to divorce procedure stipulated in the Ordinance, there did emerge differences among the Ulama themselves along theological lines. According to the provisions of the Ordinance, the mere pronouncement of 'I Divorce thee' three times at a single sitting (the so-called 'triple divorce') or over a prolonged period did not bring about a legal divorce between the couple. It was rather, taken as a starting-point of divorce proceedings spanning over a few months in which, first, there had to be an arbitration council to bring the estranged parties together and negotiate a settlement for avoiding the marital breakup. This proposed arrangement boldly refuted the established practice in the Hanafi law whereby the 'triple *talaq* (divorce)' immediately ends the marriage. By refusing to accept this procedure, the drafters of the law had effectively appropriated for themselves the right to amend 'anomalies' in Hanafi law. In theory, it was no longer the Hanafi edicts but the recognition extended by the courts that carried legal weightage in determining the conclusion of marriage or divorce. Among the Ahl-i-Hadith, however, 'triple divorce' at one sitting is considered equivalent to a single divorce and not to the three mandatory for dissolving a marriage. This was why the Ahl-i-Hadith leader Da'ud Ghaznawi called upon the Ulama to make cautious appraisal of the proposed law and not to outrightly reject it. The Ahl-i-Hadith insisted that even though the present rulers were not trustworthy in matters pertaining to religion, it would be unwise not to support legislation in favour of the suppressed classes that could even be justified in terms of its compatibility with Islamic laws and ethos.<sup>123</sup>

Other than the Ahl-i-Hadith, many among the supporters of the Ordinance, too, found the new divorce procedure objectionable. *Tulu-i-Islam*'s objection was that an arbitration commission can only be formed before the pronouncement of divorce. Once this pronouncement had been made, it was no longer possible to put forth the matter in front of a council.<sup>124</sup> Even among the members of the Council of Islamic Ideology, the majority opinion was that the Quranic injunctions regarding divorce and arbitration had been intermingled to result in a confused, unpractical

divorce procedure being adopted. Another point of dispute among the Council members was the issue of orphaned grandchild's right to inheritance. J.N.D. Anderson—the most well-known authority on law reforms across the Muslim world—noted the complications arising out of the new arrangement enforced by the Family Laws. He compared the Pakistani law with similar reforms in Iraq where the law did not provide for an explicit share to the orphaned grandchild but made a provision for a mandatory will in their favour. On the imbalance resulting from the provisions of the Pakistani Family Laws on the traditional scheme of distributing shares among the legatees, Anderson wrote:

Suppose there were only two claimants to an estate: a daughter, and the daughter of a predeceased son. In this case, under the Hanafi law, the daughter would initially take one-half and the granddaughter one-sixth and then finally—by the doctrine of the 'return'—the daughter would receive three-quarters of the estate and the granddaughter one-quarter; whereas, under the Pakistani Ordinance, the position would be virtually reversed, for the granddaughter would step into the shoes of her deceased father and take two-thirds of the whole estate, leaving only one-third to her aunt. And the second objection is that, whereas the device of 'obligatory bequests' can find *some* justification and support in the classical texts, the introduction of a right of representation can find none whatever.<sup>125</sup>

Despite clear discrepancies in the 'Islamic' content of the Family Laws, as admitted by its proponents and pointed out by the opponents, all efforts to repeal it failed. A Muslim Family Laws Ordinance (Repeal) Bill was moved in the Assembly by Abbas Ali Khan of East Pakistan in 1963. The Bill failed to muster the required majority. A more serious challenge to the Family Laws came under the Ziaul Haq regime when the ministry of law issued a strongly worded recommendation for the abolition of these laws. According to the statement:

The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1961, is utterly un-Islamic. It is against the Holy Quran and Sunnah. It has dared to amend the Quranic Law to the extent of *Iriddah* [apostasy] and its existence is a slur, a blot, a bad blot on the glorious name of Islam and our Islamic country. Such a legislation or even its name need not be protected. Let us clean the blot altogether by its total repeal.<sup>126</sup>

General Mujib-ur-Rahman—a known sympathizer of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez in those days and a close aide of the then President because of his assignment to run the important Information Ministry—claims that he



had prevailed upon General Ziaul Haq 'not to touch these laws.'<sup>127</sup> He defended these laws because according to him, they offered some relief to women, and also probably because of his own inclinations towards Parwez's ideas, some of which had been incorporated into the Family Laws. However, with the coming of these laws under the jurisdiction of the Federal Shariat Court after a decision of the appellate court in 1993, certain of its provisions became vulnerable to revision or outright repeal. The result was a decision by the Federal Shariat Court in 2000 stating that the Section 4 of the said Ordinance dealing with the right to inheritance of the orphaned grandchild is repugnant to the injunctions of Islam and 'nugatory to the scheme of succession envisaged by the Quran.'<sup>128</sup> An appeal against this decision is now pending with the Shariat Bench of the Supreme Court.

## 6.12. 'INSTITUTIONALIZED LIBERALISM' UNDER

### DR FAZLUR RAHMAN

Fazlur Rahman's association with the Ayub government raised several concerns among the Ulama about the 'secular agenda' of the regime. What fuelled their suspicions was the alleged similarity between the views of Fazlur Rahman and Ghulam Ahmed Parwez on the status of Hadith and Sunnat, although, with regard to the latter, Rahman claimed to be toeing the traditional beliefs of the Muslims. His controversial ideas in disrespect of some unanimously agreed upon dogmas among Muslims came to light when the question of *Riba* (usury) was discussed in 1962. The issue cropped up because of the delay in a passage of the Budget Bill on the ground that it was un-Islamic, for the reason that it showed incomes and expenditures calculated on the basis of interest rates. When the matter was put to the Council of Islamic Ideology, of which Fazlur Rahman too was a member, it was stipulated in its report that the present-day realities were not favourable for the elimination of *Riba*. It also cited concern and criticism of certain Ahadith which clashed with the Council's understanding of the term *Riba* and unreservedly called for its abolition. This note drafted by the Council was leaked to the Press leading to a considerable outcry from the public. Fazlur Rahman was primarily framed as the author of this passage in the Bill due to his close proximity with the person and ideas of Ayub Khan. What also came under criticism was Fazlur Rahman's continuing links with the Islamic Studies Centre of the McGill University and his scheme of inviting scholars from abroad to train scholars within the country for research on Islam.<sup>129</sup> But regardless of these



controversies, Rahman continued to enjoy the trust and support of Ayub Khan, and within the close circles of the Council of Islamic Ideology, he did not deter from offering his bold and ingenious interpretations on various themes. One interesting example is that of the discussion on proposed ban on alcohol in Pakistan. While the rest of the members were unanimously in favouring a ban on all drinks with the slightest of alcoholic content, Rahman dissented by arguing the permissibility of alcohol drinking provided it does not result in intoxication. By this logic he allowed the consumption of Beer and likened it to *nabiz*—a fermented drink from dates with an alcoholic content of up to 5 per cent, like that of beer—whose consumption was considered acceptable by some Companions and jurists.<sup>130</sup>

In 1967 Fazlur Rahman was again dragged into controversy over the question of mechanical slaughter. The Pakistani High Commission in London had sought an opinion about the decision of British authorities to make use of machine slaughter for animals meant for consumption. Although Mufti Shafi—the most prominent and learned of the Deoband scholars at that time—decreed in the favour of this practice on the condition that the person pressing the button must recite *bismillah*, Rahman's statement that even pronouncing *bismillah* was not required became highly controversial in the light of the reports that the Government of Pakistan was covertly engaged in constructing mechanical slaughterhouses.<sup>131</sup> The conservative resentment against him was fuelled further by the contents of his book *Islam* which had been published a year ago and in which he was alleged to have construed that Quran was not external to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and that the Divine inspiration to him came from within. For attributing 'man-made qualities' to the Quran, Rahman was denounced as *Munkir-i-Qur'an* (denier of Quran), worse than even Ghulam Ahmad Parwez who was declared *Munkir-i-Sunnat* (denier of Sunnat).<sup>132</sup> The issue was taken up to the Parliament level, and a number of demonstrations took place during 1968. In February of the same year, Islamic Research Institute had organized an international conference to commemorate the fourteenth-hundred anniversary of the Revelation of Quran which served as a forum for espousing liberal themes and modernistic interpretation of Islam and, hence, handed yet another reason for opposing religious groups to denounce Rahman. The government, which by that time had lost considerable ground to opposition-led mass campaigns on various political issues, could only offer a meek support to Rahman. As agitation went out

of control between May and August 1968, the law minister S.M. Zafar advised Fazlur Rahman to quit.<sup>133</sup>

It should, however, be noted that Fazlur Rahman's directorship of the Islamic Research Institute did not lead to churning out of religious literature that was always in tune with the religious worldview of Ayub Khan.<sup>134</sup> What was more worthy of consideration was the perception about the religious ideas of Fazlur Rahman that had cropped up in the minds of the Ulama and Ayub's continued willingness to stand by him despite pressures of contrary nature.

### 6.13. THE AYUB-PARWEZ 'NEXUS' DURING THE 1960s

Ayub's support of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez and his interest in promoting the latter's ideas and occasionally assisting its organizational growth was due to the confluence of the religious ideas of the two on matters of mutual concerns. The link between them was an open secret during the whole of Ayub's period and was another aspect of his policies regarding Islam that invited hostile reactions from conservative quarters.<sup>135</sup> The intense dislike of the Ulama for Parwez and his proximity to the government circles was not lost upon Ayub Khan. Confidential reports submitted to the government highlighted the reasons for such animosity between the Ulama and Parwez.<sup>136</sup> This rivalry between the two, noted the report, pre-dated the creation of Pakistan when Parwez opposed the nationalistically inclined Ulama on the issue of Pakistan and later rebutted their ideas to establish a theocracy in Pakistan. The report advised that the government distance itself from 'P' (i.e. Parwez) to dispel the perception of the influence of his ideas in the framing of the constitutions and other reforms being introduced by the regime. The situation was being exploited by the Ulama who could not have targeted the president directly but had found an 'indirect method of criticizing the president and the Martial Law regime by launching a campaign against 'P'. They were also apprehensive of the fact that the new Constitution that was being formulated might be influenced by the views of 'P'. The *fatwa* (religious edict) issued by these Ulama against 'P' a few days before the announcement of the new Constitution, was in fact meant to serve as a basis for the opposition of the Constitution if it contained any material supportive of the views of 'P'. For these reasons, the report noted that it was not in the government's interest to strengthen the misgivings of the opposition. At the same time it was deemed inadvisable to suppress the ideas of 'P' so that the religious forces do not regard themselves as

possessing a (false) sense of leverage over the regime.<sup>137</sup> The middle course of action suggested was that the members of the Islamic Advisory Council be drawn from 'major sects' alone as it would automatically not include 'P' since he never claimed to belong to any sect.<sup>138</sup> Parwez's link with Ayub Khan in the following years, however, does not seem to have been affected much by this report.

A cordial relationship with almost all the successive regimes in Pakistan was perhaps considered vital by Parwez as a survival strategy amidst hostile opposition to him by the Ulama. Before Ayub, there were similar rumours of government assistance to Parwez during Governor General Ghulam Mohammad's rule for the reason that *Tulu-i-Islam* was mostly uncritical of the most controversial policies and acts of the ruling regime. Parwez defended eulogizing Ghulam Muhammad's 'services' as he always made an open, frontal attack against retrogressive forces and painted a progressive image of Islam at important political and international forums. Another reason for which he received kudos from Parwez was his act of dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in 1954 which thwarted the possibility of Bengalis—under the sway of influential Hindu intellectuals in their part of Pakistan—passing a resolution resulting in the amalgamation of Pakistan into India or at least becoming a part of some confederation.<sup>139</sup> Thereafter, throughout the Martial Law regime of 1960s Parwez extended unqualified support to Ayub Khan and then hastened to congratulate Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on his 'swearing-in' as the new ruler of Pakistan, although, Bhutto he had come to power by riding on the massive wave of anti-Ayub sentiments among the people. Parwez requested a personal meeting with Bhutto; supported his vision of a socialist economy; and ensured his full support for its implementation.<sup>140</sup>

Although Parwez had suggested scrapping the democratic setup and imposing Martial Law back in 1957,<sup>141</sup> the reason he gained access to the President's attention was because he and his ideas were first introduced to Ayub Khan by Habib-ur-Rahman who was a great admirer of Parwez's writings. Habib-ur-Rahman was the police chief in Abbottabad and was responsible for the security arrangements whenever Ayub visited his ancestral hometown in the nearby area.<sup>142</sup> Due to the facilitations offered by Habib-ur-Rahman from inception of the Martial Law regime of Ayub Khan, a close affinity was established between Ayub and Parwez. For the latter, Ayub possessed 'heart and soul of a true 'Momin', undoubtedly animated with the desire to strive for the greater of glory of Islam.'<sup>143</sup> He pinned all his hopes on Ayub for the setting up of a truly Islamic state. In Ayub's coming to power Parwez visualized the completion of 'some

Divine scheme' for the enforcement of the Quranic principles—an accomplishment 'unique and unparalleled in the Muslim history since the days of (Hazrat) Abu Bakr and (Hazrat) Omar.'<sup>144</sup> Ayub, on his part, admired the scholarly credentials of Parwez and shared his unorthodox approach towards Islam. On one occasion when Parwez called on Ayub Khan and presented him with one of his writings, Ayub noted down the following observation about Parwez:

He [Parwez] had written a very enlightening article on communism and the philosophy of Mao Tse-Tung. We discussed that and told him that Islam's only hope of survival as a living philosophy was if the deep rust of corrosion of *mullahism* could be removed from it and the Muslim *millat* be allowed to make its principles in the light of current requirements and circumstances.<sup>145</sup>

Ayub wanted to make use of Parwez's scholarly knowledge of Islam, the mouthpiece of his organization Tulu'-i-Islam, and the local Tulu'-i-Islam units spread all over the country to facilitate Ayub's agenda of reform and propagation of religious ideals cherished by both of them. For this purpose, a joint strategy was to be chalked out whereby the government was to support Tulu'-i-Islam by financing the publication of certain 'reformist literature'. In order to kick-start the publication project, Parwez requested substantial funds totalling Rs 1,50,000 per annum to purchase printing material and to hire office staff. This amount excluded the additional sum of Rs 50,000 which, if granted, was to be used to buy a printing press for the organization.<sup>146</sup> It is difficult to ascertain whether the requested funds were all furnished or not but there does exist documentary evidence that Parwez, or for that matter Tulu'-i-Islam, was occasionally a recipient of direct financial support from Ayub Khan. In May 1964, a letter sent to Parwez from the President's secretariat stated that as desired by the President a bank draft worth Rs 25,000 was being sent for him for a 'special secret job'.<sup>147</sup> Parwez accepted the donation only after having made clear that this sum of money was intended 'to be spent towards the codification of the Quran and on other literature in English on the interpretation and understanding of the Quran'.<sup>148</sup>

While the details about the procurement of funds were probably left to be sorted out between Parwez and members of the bureaucracy close to Ayub Khan—like Qudrar Ullah Shahab and later Altaf Gauhar—governmental departments such as the Ministry of Information and the Bureau for National Reconstruction used to feed Parwez with the requirements of the state, although, these two departments were not

always supportive of the ideas put forward by Parwez. One such theme, which was pursued by Parwez with some enthusiasm, was the introduction of one common sermon for the Friday prayers. He drafted six specimen sermons and sent them for approval to Brigadier F.R. Khan who headed the Bureau for National Reconstruction. Parwez tried to ensure that the sermons were in consonance with the 'wishes' of the Brigadier in terms of language and content and displayed a willingness to 'produce at the rate of four 'Sermons' a month' if he could be provided with a typewriter and a stenographer.<sup>149</sup> The project, however, could not take off as the Bureau did not show much faith in its feasibility.

One project for which *Tulu'-i-Islam* wanted to offer its services to the Bureau which the latter was willing to accept readily, was regarding a smear campaign against the Jama'at-i-Islami and its leader and chief ideologue Maulana Maududi. The Jama'at and its leader had been a source of irritation for Ayub Khan for holding views that were antithetical to that of Ayub's and engaging in agitational politics against the regime. For once Jama'at-i-Islami had been banned in 1964 on the pretext of damaging Pakistan's relations with Iran by writing an article about Iranian government's persecution of the Islamists in its country. On his part, Parwez too had scores to settle with Maududi. The two had once been supportive and appreciative of one another's efforts for the cause of Islam<sup>150</sup> but soon parted ways when Parwez unfolded his ideas on Hadith and Maududi's writings became increasingly targeted against the policies and the leadership of Muslim League. Soon after independence, Parwez used *Tulu'-i-Islam* as a platform to launch bitter attacks against Jama'at-i-Islami by highlighting its alleged 'anti-Pakistan' credentials during the 1940s and continuity of the same in independent Pakistan where Maududi was opposing military and government service under an 'un-Islamic' state and was not willing to lend support to Pakistan's interference in Kashmir as a just act of war. On religious issues, *Tulu'-i-Islam* targeted Jama'at-i-Islami's support base among the college graduates and middle classes by focusing on his ideas being unfavourable to women's rights and land reforms, and his advocacy of slavery; possession of concubines and capital punishment for apostasy.<sup>151</sup> More incisive was *Tulu'-i-Islam's* mockery of Maududi's stated claim as being the *Mizaj Shanas-i-Rusul* (reader of the prophetic mind). It was argued that if Islamic law was to be based on Quran and Hadith, and if Maududi was to be the one arbiter sifting authentic Ahadith from forged ones, then it would boil down to an arrangement where Maududi would single-handedly have the authority to strike down any law or aspect of Shari'at as repugnant to Islam for its



alleged inconsistency with Hadith.<sup>152</sup> Stretching the argument further, *Tulu'-i-Islam* asserted that if the opinion of some Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadith scholars who regarded Maududi as a Munkir-i-Hadith were to be accepted then, in the light of the statement of Jama'at-i-Islami's own senior leader Miyan Tufayl Muhammad, such a person will be branded an apostate who, then, according to Maududi's views, should be put to the sword.<sup>153</sup>

*Tulu'-i-Islam* had kept track of Maulana Maududi's statements and the activities of his religio-political organizations throughout the 1950s. A collection of the articles written by *Tulu'-i-Islam* in opposition to Maududi and Jama'at-i-Islami had already been published in the form of a book. An abundance of new material has been taken out by the Jama'at-i-Islami since then, and in retaliation the Idara Tulu'-i-Islam planned on publishing another anti-Jama'at-i-Islami book. The Idara was to 'publish the book at its own cost but...only if the Government consider[ed] the publication of a book of the contemplated nature advisable and useful.' The proposed book was to describe in considerable detail Maududi's and his party's attitude towards and activities: 'against the idea and creation of Pakistan, his ambitions after the establishment of Pakistan, the poverty of his knowledge, lack of character and his general beliefs, the fascist nature of the Jama'at-i-Islami, his attempts to gain political ends under the cloak of religion and to cheat the public in diverse ways, and so on.'<sup>154</sup>

On another occasion the Bureau of National Research and Reference itself approached Parwez and requested for his assistance to write against 'Maududiism', especially in response to one of his recent articles about the righteous path trodden by the Jama'at-i-Islami.<sup>155</sup> Parwez was not content with writing a few articles to counter the influence of the Jama'at-i-Islami and Maududi wanted a comprehensive plan in this regard to be introduced at the government level. The Jama'at-i-Islami had fared better than expected during the 1965 elections, and the thought of the party making further electoral gains prompted Parwez to suggest to Ayub Khan a 'three-pronged attack' to 'curb the activities of Jama'at-i-Islami'. He suggested 'exposing' the personal fascist conduct of Maududi; wage an ideological war with Jama'at-i-Islami itself; and equip the Muslim League to take on 'Maududiism' as a political movement.<sup>156</sup>

It is difficult to estimate the benefits, material or otherwise, accruing to Parwez from his association with Ayub Khan. While for the latter it became a political liability, just as was the case with Fazlur Rahman,<sup>157</sup> Parwez too did not escape criticism from and further distrust of the religious quarters. Ideally Parwez would have liked Ayub Khan to



introduce Tulu'-i-Islam's literature in the school curriculum and personally identify himself with this Quranic movement so as to further the influence of these ideas. He wrote: 'It is time that our younger generation is introduced to Tulu'-i-Islam literature without delay. And *this will be possible only if you identify yourself with my Quranic movement*, the sole object of which is to inculcate in the mind of our younger generation that habit of constructive thinking in the light of Divine guidance.'<sup>158</sup> But contrarily to what Parwez aspired for, he often complained about being ignored on television and radio and the fact that his publications were blacklisted in civil and military departments. His most cherished project of setting up of a 'Quranic College' in Lahore could not materialize either, since he was almost snubbed in response to a request by him for some acres of land for the purpose in Lahore. He was told, on the behalf of the President, that since land in Lahore was scarce and costly, he should raise funds from among his supporters and then try and purchase the land at concessionary rates if the rules so permit.<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless, this decade-long honeymoon with the power elite certainly amplified the relevance and prominence of Tulu'-i-Islam's literature and Parwez's writings. It was perhaps this disproportionate amplification that incensed the Ulama and drove them into declaring a *fatwa* of *kufri* against him. The *fatwa* was issued by approximately 1000 Ulama belonging to a variety of sects. It was observed in the *fatwa* that Parwez was the *sum total* of all those ideas and movements that had plagued the Muslim society since the advent of British rule in South Asia.<sup>160</sup> Parwez tried to argue his case but the correspondence between him and Mufti Shaf'i broke down because of the intransigence shown by the latter. In vain, Parwez wrote to Ayub Khan and reminded him of the Martial Law regulations prohibiting provocative writings against any Muslims sect. He expressed the fear that the Ulama may attempt to use the situation to stoke up an agitation similar to that of 1953 to gain prominence or destabilize the regime.<sup>161</sup> Parwez's worst fears in this regard never did come true.

#### 6.14. 'THE FUNDAMENTAL CONFLICT' PROJECT 1967

Attempts on the part of Ayub Khan to determine the role of Islam in accordance with his own scheme of things had not been abortive when it came to encouraging—as long as he was firmly saddled in power—a more liberal outlook and free enquiry in the organizations for research on Islam and related subjects of interest. A related concern, whose relevance was not lost upon Ayub with regard to successful pursuit of his agenda of

reform, was the imperative of taking on the religious forces with vigour and not to give the impression of buckling under their pressure. In the latter, however, he was not always successful. He could not hold on to his decision of dropping the appellation 'Islamic' from the official name of the Republic of Pakistan and had to revert back to the original one by amending the Constitution. Similarly, in a provision of the Constitution that no law shall be made in contradiction to the Quran and Sunnat—the interpretation, understanding and practice of the twin terms was left open to respective sects. This was much to the chagrin of Ayub Khan's own supporters among the liberals and the religious circles. His efforts to remove any limitation in the name of Islam on the legislative powers of the parliament also met with a similar fate. He had attempted to achieve this by a slight change of wording in the Objectives Resolution. The edited version, incorporated into the 1962 Constitution as its preamble stated: 'Whereas sovereignty over the entire Universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone, and the authority exercisable by the people is a sacred trust [...].' The qualifying Divine authority which was previously stated in the Resolution as 'the limits prescribed by Him' was hence removed. The First Amendment Act 1963 provided for the reintroduction of this qualification into the Constitution.<sup>162</sup>

These trends seemed to confirm the apprehension among the power elites that the influence of the religious personnel was on the increase and that a comprehensive strategy needed to be chalked out to stall its further growth. The result of the 1965 presidential elections in which the religious parties had polled better than expected, having received the anti-Ayub Khan vote was used as a pretext to bait Ayub into thinking about pitching liberal forces against the retrogressive ones to eliminate the forces of religious resistance and actualize the evolutionary progress towards social welfare and an *ideally* Islamic state. S.M. Zafar, who was the law minister during the second tenure of Ayub Khan's presidency, made an oblique reference to such growing perceptions among the ruling circles in a book published soon after Ayub's ouster from power. He talked about:

[a] school of thought in the government, particularly among the services classes, according to which the establishment of a modern state in Pakistan [was] not possible because of the stronghold by the mullahs upon the population in Pakistan. To them there [was] a 'fundamental conflict' between the two, the idea of a modern state and the ideology of the religious exponents.<sup>163</sup>

Ayub Khan himself endorsed such a reading of the Pakistani society as divided along the two antagonistic classes of modern educated classes and the Mullahs. He observed:

Our society is torn by a number of schisms; *the most fundamental* is the one which separates the educated classes from the traditional groups. It is vital that understanding and communication between these two sections should be restored. This can come through a proper interpretation of Islamic principles and their application to the present-day problems. Unless this happens the gulf will grow which may eventually isolate the traditional groups from the modern educated classes and alienate the latter from Islam.<sup>164</sup>

Ayub Khan wrote this as a preface to his memoirs in 1967—the same year when he approved preliminary discussions on the outline of a project titled: 'The Fundamental Conflict'. The prime purpose of this project was to integrate the clerical forces—referred to as Mullahs throughout the proceedings of the project—with the rest of the society and introduce them to modern knowledge so that they could become productive members of society and help reduce the yawning gap between the modern educated and the religious classes.

The project was conceived by the Ministry of Information and was probably the brainchild of the influential bureaucrat Altaf Gauhar.<sup>165</sup> The preliminary discussions to set the agenda of the project were held in a Governors' Conference that was held on 23–25 February 1967 in Rawalpindi. It was accepted that Pakistan, where 'the races and languages were so different and the areas were separated by a distance of 1200 miles, the mainstay of nationhood was religion.'<sup>166</sup> Pakistan, unlike what happened in countries like Egypt and Turkey with comparatively more racial and linguistic homogeneity, could not afford to discard religion. Now that Pakistan could not live without the inclusion of religion in its socio-political fabric, the dilemma before the attendants of the conference—as it had been for the Pakistani power elite since 1947—was how to shape its utilization so that it did not drag the country into the embrace of retrogressive forces. This could not be avoided without taking the religious forces on board and indoctrinating them with the power elites' and that of the so-called enlightened educated class' brand of a progressive Islam. The focus of the whole project, hence, was to highlight the dichotomy between the Mullah and the enlightened classes and suggest ways, whereby, the former could be convinced into playing a constructive and desirable role in society. This required defining the position of the Mullah in the society at the moment and what was

demanding of him by the power elite. Even more important was a discussion on the religious ideas of the Mullah and how he could be infused with modernist currents so that he came closer to sharing a progressive version of Islam like the rest of the society. The idea was effectively captured in the policy statement issued by the Ministry of Information as the initiator of the project:

What we know of Islam today is nothing but customs, rituals, forms and ceremonies observed in the days of Prophet. We have therefore inherited a distorted picture of Islam in which the real spirit is lacking. Today any concept or deed inconsistent with an established practice though in accordance with the basic teachings of Quran was dubbed as un-Islamic—*Bidat* [innovation in religion] and 'modernisation' of Islam. This attitude has to be changed if the true spirit of Islam is to be revived.... The chairman said that there was a gulf between the Mullah and the intelligentsia.... Both the groups however believe that Islam presents a complete code of life. The Mullah wanted to make that code of life so rigid that no step could be taken unless it was in accordance with this preconceived notions and thus tried to arrest all progress and development.... *It was therefore essential to contain his influence by creating a class which could project Islam in its true perspective. The work of the committee is to find out methods to achieve the above ends.*<sup>167</sup>

On an ideological plane, the various proposals and papers submitted at the conference offered no viable solution other than vaguely suggesting that the Mullah be 'modernized to a limited extent' or a more long-term goal of breeding a new class who have a 'proper' knowledge of Islam and the realities of modern life.<sup>168</sup> What was deemed to be more practical as a measure for short-term gains was the policy of co-opting the Mullah, who was described as living the life of a parasite and a beggar, by improving his social status and living standard.<sup>169</sup> He could be usefully employed at various tiers of the Basic Democracies and paid respectable salaries through the Auqaf department for their services as the Imams at the mosques. The less hard-core among the Mullahs could be won over by such steps. Those who were expected to continue with issuing inflammatory speeches and object to government reforms—for example those with regard to family planning—were recommended to be dealt with strongly under some new provision in the penal code.<sup>170</sup> This approach found endorsement from Ghulam Ahmad Parwez who himself had been hard-hit by the issuance of a decree of apostasy against him by the Ulama. He supported such measures as keeping a strict vigilance over the Mullahs; 'deal their subversive activities with a ruthless pugnacity';

and initiation of treason proceedings against those who would go out of bounds in criticizing the state legislations.<sup>171</sup> He used the forum to heighten the perceived threat of Jama'at-i-Islami's growing strength and proposed strict actions against its operations and sources of funding. This point was further deliberated upon during the Governors Conference as it was agreed to take steps to 'expose' the anti-Pakistan character of the Jama'at-i-Islami. It was to be done by isolating group of Ulama for exposing and attacking the Jama'at-i-Islami, or through the platform of a 'non-official research organizations' of some political party.<sup>172</sup> However none of the proposals could be effectively translated into practical measures due to brewing differences among the members of the committee themselves on the nature and utility of the concept of 'Fundamental Conflict' even before the project had formally taken off. S.M. Zafar was the one to raise a dissenting voice in this regard. His views on the project, anonymously quoted in the proceedings, were that there did not exist a fundamental conflict but only a misunderstanding between the two classes highlighted in the project. He is reported to have stated: 'Fundamental conflict is a term which should be applied not in defining the relations between members of the same 'milat' [*Millat*] but in describing those between the Muslims and the Hindus or between the Muslims and the Christians.'<sup>173</sup> Therefore, after a few preliminary sessions, the whole project had to be scrapped in the face of opposition from within the committee and the possible political fallouts in an already instable situation in the country. Nevertheless, the project—and a discussion about it at the conclusion of a differentiated reading of the politics of Islam in Pakistan during the period 1947–69—serves as a fitting reminder of the power elite's anxious envisioning of competing interpretations of Islam during these years and the urge felt by them to promote the discourse of Islamic modernism as it coincided with their own requirements and visions. In the shaping and realization of these preferential ends and versions, Ghulam Ahmad Parwez—and other like-minded religious scholars and researchers on Islam—had played a significant rôle.

### 6.15. CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that the Ahl al-Qur'an ideas were not simply theological dabbling of little consequence; rather, they had a considerable practical significance as well. It shows the merit of studying the ideological trajectory of Ahl al-Qur'an movements even if they cannot be shown to have enjoyed mass support or following. Their academic relevance,



reaching its highest mark in the 1930s, assumed political significance after 1947 as the Pakistani power elites—whose own religious worldview was largely shaped by the discourse of Islamic Modernism—found it useful to employ and concur with some of the Ahl al-Qur'an scholars and their ideals for the purpose of establishing a state encompassing Islamic principles but precluding the role of the Ulama. The distinguishing feature of this approach towards Islam's role in Pakistan during the period—in congruence with some of the ideas of various Ahl al-Qur'an scholars and the proponents of Islamic Modernism—was the recognition of a distinction between the so-called 'Permanent values' of Islam and mutability of its 'Impermanent values' so as to allow for dynamism in amendment of Islamic laws and make scope for fresh legislation. A necessary corollary of disregard for the jurisprudential contributions of the scholars from the yesteryears, i.e. the Isnad paradigm, was the inadmissibility of Ulama role in the functioning of the state and the law-making process. This dissociation from the religious and textual authority of the past allowed envisioning of a state with an avowed regard for Islamic values and its relevance as the guiding principles for the workings of the state. The chapter, hence, brings to light a hitherto unknown aspect of Pakistan's history during its formative years and the discreet role played by Ghulam Ahmad Parwez—and some other Ahl al-Qur'an or, at least, their ideas—in shaping some of the policies of the power elites during that period.

The politics of Islam in Pakistan after 1969 falls outside the purview of the present study. However it needs to be pointed out that starting from early 1970s, power elites were either unable to or simply did not pursue Islamic Modernism as their *ideal* for an Islamic state. Several laws were passed after seeking consent and interpretation from the Ulama. This trend was best exemplified in the legislation declaring the Ahmadiyya sect as non-Muslims in 1974. During the parliamentary debate which lasted for several weeks, prominent Ulama were invited to 'guide' the elected representatives about the 'heresy' of the Ahmadis. Some 'cosmetic' measures were also adopted (like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's decision to declare Friday as the weekly holiday instead of Sunday) to enforce a stricter Islamic moral code in the society based on a reified understanding of Islamic religious traditions. At the same time, the judiciary itself made room for accepting Islam as the *grundnorm* of the Pakistani law and society and the very basis on which the state was created and supposed to be functioning or administering justice to its people.<sup>174</sup> What transpired under General Ziaul Haq's regime of 'Islamization' is a different episode



altogether in the history of Pakistan. It needs to be probed whether these contrasting trends gained momentum because Islamic Modernism failed to live up to the expectation of the people as a means of creating an *ideally* Islamic state or due to changes in socio-political, economic and geopolitical factors and the vogue of populist democracy in Pakistan. In this regard it would be instructive to ask whether the ideological makeup of the power elites itself underwent some transformation toward reified religious traditions or whether they simply succumbed to pressures beyond their control. It is hoped that the theoretical formulations laid down in the present study would help any future research addressing these questions, which are of significant academic and practical interest.

## NOTES

1. These include Idara Tulu'-i-Islam, Tulu'-i-Islam Trust, The Quranic Research Centre, The Quranic Education Society, Parwez Memorial Research Scholars Library and Bazm-i Tulu'-i-Islam (with branches all over Pakistan and most countries of Europe, North America and other parts of the world.).
2. The audio/video lectures are played at the local units of Bazm-i Tulu'-i-Islam every Sunday. All of Parwez's books have also been digitalized and put on line. Cf. <http://www.toluislam.com/> The funding for the digitalization of Ahl al-Qur'an works has been provided by its sympathizers settled in Europe and North America. This was probably been done because not many public libraries buy Parwez's works and so there was a fear that his works, too, would be 'lost' like that of Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi and Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari. (Lately, some of the books of these scholars have been reprinted by Muhammad 'Ali Fariq of Makraba-i-Ukhuwwat Lahore). This is author's experience that even in libraries where Parwez's books have been entered in the catalogue are missing from their location marks. This has also been my observation that many of the private collections donated to public libraries and educational institutions by intellectuals and former bureaucrats carry the copies of Parwez's writings. This gives a very rough indication about Parwez's popularity among these classes.
3. Like many others discussed in this dissertation, Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, too, strongly objected to the term Ahl al-Qur'an and expressed his dissociation from those who espoused these ideas.
4. One prominent Pakistani journalist included Ghulam Ahmad Parwez in a list of ten most influential Pakistanis since 1947. Cf. Khaleel Ahmed, "My Personal Ten Great Pakistanis" in *Pakistan: Behind the Ideological Mask* (Lahore, 2001), 245. Ahmed referred to *Maqam-i-Hadith* as a path-breaking work of Parwez – although it actually had been compiled by various researchers associated with Idara Tulu'-i-Islam and was not one of Parwez's own writing – and the reason for which his name had been included as one of the ten most influential persons in the history of Pakistan.
5. It was about Moses running naked after a stone which had stolen his clothes while he was bathing. Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, *Shahkar-i-Risalat* (Lahore, 1999), 32.
6. *Jami'a* (New Delhi) 79, 3–5 (March–May 1982): 80.

7. Parwez pursued this agenda with considerable enthusiasm and wrote several articles critical of Congress policies and the nationalist Ulama's concept of Nationalism. These articles, which were written mostly under the pen name of Razi, were later compiled in book form to highlight the services of Parwez during the freedom movement. He was posthumously decorated with a medal in recognition for his services in the struggle for Pakistan. Cf. Muhammad 'Umar Daraz, ed. *Tehrik-i-Pakistan ke Gumgashta Haqa'iq (Sabiqat: Tehrik-i Pakistan aur Parwez)* (Lahore, 1989). This book also referred to the brief correspondence between Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Ghulam Ahmad Parwez on the modalities of the administrative set up for the new state.
8. Interview with Husayn Qaysarani, December 2008, Lahore.
9. *Jaridah* (Karachi) 34, 74.
10. Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, *Khatam-i-Nubuwwat aur Tarikh-i-Ahmediyyat* (Lahore, 2006), 4–6.
11. *Jaridah* 29, 165. Similarly in the March–April 1933 issue of *Ma'arif*, Parwez had written an article in refutation of the deniers of Hadith. Muhammad Din Qasmi. *Janab Ghulam Ahmad Parwez Apne Alfaz ke A'ine Men* (Lahore, 2006), 40. He remained critical of the ideas of Ahl al-Qur'an and Ummat-i-Muslima during this period (and even afterwards) and described them as ignorant of the real status of the Prophet. He reiterated the ideas of his mentor Aslam Jayrapuri regarding the validity of prevalent mode of ritual practices as eternally binding. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Delhi), June 1942, 21–2.
12. The title of *Tulu'-i-Islam* used to carry Quranic verses emphasizing the obedience to the central Muslim authority.
13. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Delhi), November 1938, 25–33. In a statement similar to that of Maududi's, Parwez opined that if the body of Muslim scholars could develop an 'ability to read' (*Mizaj Shanas*) the spirit of the faith and requirements of the Shari'at then they could conveniently differentiate between the permanent and mutable aspects of Quranic injunctions. *Ibid.*, 33.
14. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Delhi), August 1940, 3–4. Parwez summed up his doctrine on Hadith in an article published in June 1942 which was more or less a repetition of the same ideas outlined above. Like all the other Ahl al-Qur'an writings of his age, Sana'ullah Amritsari took note of this article as well. *Ahl-i-Hadith*, Amritsar, 8 October 1942, 3–5.
15. For more details of these tendencies during the interwar period, cf. Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self-Expression: The Urdu Middle-Class Milieu in Mid-Twentieth Century India and Pakistan* (Routledge, 2006).
16. Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, *Islam: A Challenge to Religion* (Lahore, 1996), 77.
17. Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857–1964* (London, 1967), 224.
18. The whole project of researching and writing the lexicon was carried out mostly by Parwez himself. In addition, he had a dedicated team of research assistants well-versed in the Arabic language to aide him in this gigantic task. This included the figure of 'Umar Ahmad 'Usmani as well who was the son of one of the most important Deoband scholars in Pakistan Zafar Ahmad 'Usmani. After the completion of lexicon, Parwez wanted a 'friendly preview' of the manuscript before putting it for publication. He sought assistance from learned Arabic scholars of his time. Some of them demanded exorbitant charges for their services and others strictly refused to be part of such a 'heresy'. Cf. *Jaridah* 29, 165–7. In the end, Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi offered some help and was able to read through some portions of the lexicon. *Tulu'-i-Islam*, Lahore, July 2005, 11–22.

19. Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, *Lughat-ul-Qur'an*, 4 Vols. (Lahore, 1998–2001), 27. Among the Ahl al-Qur'an scholars, too, there was a disapproval of Parwez's lexicon. Tamanna 'Imadi wrote a detailed critique on it part of which was published. Cf. *Faran* (Karachi), September 1972, 22–33. Even those among Parwez's followers who were entrusted with the task of translating his exegesis into English found some of his meanings and interpretations as unacceptable and successfully insisted for changes in the translated versions of his writings. Interview with General Mujib-ur-Rahman, Islamabad, January 2008.
20. The term 'Persian Islam' is often used by Parwez not as referring to any particular geographical entity but certain ideological attributes which are considered by him as responsible for sapping the egalitarian and rational spirit of Islam. Parwez, *Salim ke Nam Khutur* (Lahore, 2003), 1, 83–4.
21. Parwez, *Lughat*, 1400.
22. Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, *Matalib-ul-Furqan* (Lahore, 2003), III, 360–2.
23. Parwez has described the concepts of Reward, Punishment, Hell and Paradise in terms of growth or underdevelopment of Human Self. Accordingly *Jannat* (Paradise) refers to an elevated level of human self and *Jahannum* (Hell) is a metaphoric description of Man's pain and agony in failing to attain higher levels of Human Self. Parwez, *Jahan-i-Farda* (Lahore, 1994), 210–1 and 232–5. This aspect of Parwez's thought is directly borrowed from Iqbal's concept of Ego or *khudi*. Iqbal believed that as God has breathed His Own spirit into Man, the latter is the carrier within him of infinite possibilities of creative progression. Mustansir Mir has interpreted Iqbal's philosophy of *khudi* in these words: '...just as it is in the nature of Divine *khudi* to reveal itself, so it is in the nature of every individual to express itself, since every existent has a *khudi* of its own. In fact, a thing truly partakes of existence only insofar it possesses the urge to express itself—that is, only insofar as it possesses *khudi*. Similarly, one's place in the hierarchy of being depends on the degree to which one's *khudi* is developed.' Mustansir Mir, *Iqbal* (London, 2006), 32. One's *khudi* can be nurtured by shunning passivity, engage in ceaseless quest for creativity, overcome adversity, spirited activity, devotion to God and the Prophet, and by yearning for effacement with the Absolute Ego. It is because only the Infinite Ego can be absolutely free and the finite egos can only yearn for more freedom. It is in the pursuance of this objective that lays the prospect of finite ego's growth and the actualization of the goal of more freedom. Once it becomes possible for a man to develop a powerful degree of ego-hood through his persistent endeavours, boundless creative energy for self-expression and revelation, and approaching intimacy with God, he steps into the role of a real viceregent of God in creating and re-creating the universe. Such a powerful ego enables a human being to transcend the world of Causality and Finitude, and hence render obsolete the relevance of Destiny.
24. Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, *Man wa Yazdan* (Lahore, 1991), 8–9. This introductory chapter was probably added to some later edition of the book but provides a useful summation of the ideas expressed by Parwez in the original edition as well.
25. *Ibid.*, 10. Parwez believes that the idea of an Omnipotent God was a construction of the priestly classes. It suited their vested interest of projecting themselves as the mediators between ignorant believers and God. Such a concept of inaccessibility of God and His unbounded powers was favourable for the usurpation and exercise of absolute power by autocratic rulers as well who projected themselves as God's shadow on earth. Parwez, *Kitab-ul-Taqdir* (Lahore, 2006), 49–50.
26. This proposition is also noteworthy for digressing from the generally understood Biblical and Quranic 'theories' about the origins of human species. For Parwez, the

- story of Adam was not about the origin of universe or mankind but simply about a decisive phase in the evolution of human species to a higher plane. Parwez, *Iblis wa Adam* (Lahore, 2004), 48.
27. Parwez claims that the anthropologists concur in the existence of such ideal state of material fulfilment. *Ibid.*, 51.
  28. *Ibid.*, 52.
  29. The English equivalent for the term *Nizam-i-Rububiyyat* has been taken from Sheila McDonough, 'An Ideology for Pakistan: A Study of the Works of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez', PhD Thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1963. Parwez defines the concept behind this system in these words: 'To gradually transform a particular thing from its point of origin to its highest form and to nourish it all this while to attain this purpose is called Rububiyat and the one who accomplishes it is called Rabb.' *Man wa Yazdan*, 99.
  30. Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*, 228.
  31. Parwez expressed such views with much vigour after 1947. For a considerable period in his intellectual career, Parwez had remained a proponent of private property. Muhammad Din Qasmi, *Janab Ghulam Ahmad Parwez ke Nizam-i-Rububiyyat par ek Nazar* (Lahore, 2007), 76–7. For the Quranic edicts regarding the settlement of property issues, Parwez held out the explanation that these were meant for the transitory period when capitalism was not yet completely eradicated. Parwez, *Nizam-i-Rububiyyat* (Lahore, 1995), 27.
  32. Parwez, *Challenge to Religion*, 226.
  33. *Ibid.*, 238.
  34. Parwez, *Qur'an ka Mu'ashri Nizam* (Lahore, n.d.), 13.
  35. Parwez, *Khuda aur Sarmayadar* (Lahore, 1996), 156.
  36. Parwez opined that in certain aspects Communism is even worse than Capitalism. It was because in the latter the labourer had at least the theoretical possibility of switching his job if he was not satisfied with remuneration offered to him. Such a possibility did not exist in Communism where all the factors of production were to be owned by the state and the labourer forced to offer his services for whatever was offered to him. Parwez, *Jahan Marx Nakam reh Gaya* (Lahore, ca. 2000), 40.
  37. *Ibid.*, 49.
  38. Parwez, *Challenge to Religion*, 229.
  39. For that, and other services rendered for the benefit of mankind, Parwez gave the title of *Miraj-i-Insaniyyat* (Epirome of Humanity) and *Shahkar-i-Risalat* (Prophet's Masterpiece) to his biographies of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and 'Umar respectively. However, he acknowledged that the historical resources might be lacking in evidence supporting the existence of *Nizam-i-Rububiyyat* but that it was more because the retrogressive forces removed all the traces of past so as to engender the same old system of dictatorial rule and priesthood. In this scenario, Quran offered the most authentic source of information acceptable to all as the most preferable source of history. *Shahkar-i-Risalat*, 52–3.
  40. Parwez, *Insaniyyat ka Akhbari Sahara* (Lahore, 1989), 27. On the basis of this idea, Parwez always tried to distance himself and his organization from other Ahl al-Qur'an groups—especially the Lahore based journal *Balagh-ul-Qur'an*. The latter, however, insisted on its ideological uniformity with *Tulu-i-Islam* and borrowed many of Parwez's terminologies—like *Nizam-i-Rububiyyat*—in their own writings.
  41. In an answer to a query, *Tulu-i-Islam* explained its doctrine of Hadith by giving an example. It said that the Ahadith reported about Prophet's administration of justice but it added little to our knowledge since Quran itself had repeatedly enjoined upon

the believers to be steadfast in justice. Similarly there were problems in ascertaining the authenticity of Hadith on non-Isnad basis. For example if Prophet fixed the rate of Zakat at 2.5 per cent during his lifetime, how could it be ascertained that whether the Hadith citing this rate was authentic or not? *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Karachi), November 1952, 64-5. Thus, 'theoretically', *Tulu'-i-Islam* was right in claiming that they were not Munkir-i-Hadith for they did not have problems in accepting traditions as sayings of the Prophet as long as they were in conformity with Quran and did not insult the Companions or damage the prestige of the Prophet. Cf. Idara Tulu'-i-Islam. *Ilzamat aur Unki Haqiqat* (Lahore, ca.) 1990, 2-7. But this recognition on their part remained ceremonial for they did not accept that the Prophet's sayings established as authentic had a binding authority for the Muslims of every period.

42. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Lahore), July 2005, 38-40.
43. In an article, Parwez distanced himself from all those Ahl al-Qur'an groups and individuals practicing 'Qur'ani Namaz'. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Lahore), August 1976, 57-61.
44. Parwez, *Qur'ani Qawānin* (Lahore, 1998), I, 33.
45. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Delhi), June 1942, 21.
46. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Karachi), July 1948, 29-30.
47. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Karachi), November 1948, 27-8.
48. Parwez, *Qur'ani Qawānin*, I, 33.
49. In the context of South Asia, the Persian loan word of Namaz is generally used as a replacement for the term *Salat* in the most apt way. Parwez had objections to its use because it, according to him, helped instil among the Muslims a spiritless formalism and lack of appreciation for the more practical aspects of an all-encompassing concept of *Salat*.
50. Parwez, *Lughat*, 1041-2.
51. Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi had also adopted Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari's view of Hajj as a 'grand conference'. It was described by him as a forum which allowed the Muslims to extend cooperation among themselves in fields of politics, culture and trade. Phulwarwi, *Gulistan-i-Hadith* (Lahore), 2005, 42.
52. *Matalib al-Furqan*, III, 240-1.
53. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Karachi), August 1951, 69.
54. Parwez, *Mi'raj-i-Insaniyyat*, 357.
55. In the early 1950s, Parwez wrote epistles addressed to a fictional character named Salim—a young man exhibiting 'typical' concerns about various aspects of Islamic teachings owing to his educational background and exposure to Western notions of enlightenment and liberalism. Cf. Parwez, *Salim ke nam Khurat* (Lahore), 1993-2006, 3 vols. Similar efforts were made by one anti-Parwez scholar Munzur Ahsan 'Abbasi who wrote letters to Aslam—a fictional young man detracted from the right path by the writings of Parwez. Cf. 'Abbasi, *Asa-ye Musawwi*, Lahore, n.d. Parwez wrote a similar series of letters to an imagined young woman named Tahira. Cf. *Tahira ke nam Khurat* (Lahore, 2001). However, it should also be noted that Parwez had a nephew named Salim and a woman named Tahira was regarded by him as his adopted daughter. Parwez did not have any children of his own. Salim, now a drug addict, lives in impoverished conditions next to the central office of Idara Tulu'-i-Islam in the posh locality of Gulberg, Lahore.
56. For the role and attitude of 'Nationalist Ulama towards the Pakistan movement, cf. Zia-ul-Hasan Faruqi, *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan* (Bombay, 1963); Yohanan Friedman, 'The Attitude of the Jam-iyyat-i Ulama-i Hind to the Indian National Movement and to the Establishment of Pakistan', *Asian and African*



- Studies* 7 (1971): 157–80. For Maududi's stance on Pakistan, cf. Sayyid Vali Reza Naqvi, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan* (Berkeley, 1994), 103–115.
57. The state was neither a purely secular state nor did it adopt Islam as its religion. Instead, a proclamation was made in the affirmation of a single God to make adjustment for the belief system of the Indonesians—especially the Muslim majority population. Douglas Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance* (London, 1995), 11–12.
  58. For details cf. Javaid Saeed, *Islam and Modernization: A Comparative Analysis of Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey* (Westport, Connecticut), 1994.
  59. I have borrowed this classificatory scheme from Ishtiaq Ahmad's *The Concept of an Islamic State: An Analysis of the Ideological Controversy in Pakistan* (London, 1987).
  60. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 238–9. In line with the statement by Smith, this article argues that there cannot be a precise definition of an Islamic state. There can be different ideas about what constitutes an Islamic state and variety of options as to how to bring about its establishment.
  61. This process cannot be described as Islamization since this term has acquired a peculiar connotation. It is understood as referring to the drift towards a theological state based on reified religious traditions or closed body of religious doctrines, encoded by scholars of yesteryears, in the form of Shari'at.
  62. That by announcing the Islamic character of the state the religious forces had been deprived the chance of maligning the power elites for failing to implement the 'ideology of Pakistan', was offered as an explanation during the proceedings of a confidential project titled 'The Fundamental Conflict' debating the clash between the 'enlightened' and 'retrogressive' forces. The project has been discussed at greater detail later in this chapter.
  63. Khalid B. Sayeed, *Politics in Pakistan: The Nature and Direction of Change* (New York, 1980), 28.
  64. Mohammad Waseem, *Politics and the State in Pakistan* (Lahore, 1989), especially the first two chapters.
  65. Asaf Hussain, *Elite Politics in an Ideological State: The Case of Pakistan* (Folkestone, 1979), especially chapter II.
  66. Shirin Tahir-Kheli, 'Pakistani Elites and Foreign Policy Towards the Soviet Union, Iran and Afghanistan', PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1972, 3.
  67. *Ibid.*, 66 and 153. The ascendancy of such figures like Ghulam Muhammad, Iskandar Mirza, and Chaudhry Muhammad Ali to positions of Governor General and Prime Minister in the 1950s testifies to the importance of bureaucratic elite in the power structure of Pakistan.
  68. For an overview of the religious worldview of Pakistan's military elite, cf. Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army* (Berkeley, 1984).
  69. Jamal Malik, *Colonization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Institutions in Pakistan* (New Delhi, 1996), 19.
  70. Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, 225–6.
  71. For a definition of Islamic modernism, cf. Introduction. The key figures associated with Islamic modernism and their ideas about various aspects of Islam have already been detailed in Chapter 3.
  72. Cited in Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan, and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (Karachi, 1997), 197.
  73. Javaid Saeed, *Islam and Modernization*, 76–7.



74. Zahid Chaudhri, *Pakistan ki Siyasi Tarikh* (Lahore, 1997), XI, 360. Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, the chief architect of ideologically biased history textbooks taught in Pakistani schools, and S.A. Rahman who later became Chief Justice of the Pakistani Supreme Court, noted that there did not exist a clash between Islamic and Western forms of government. Ulama representatives like Ibrahim 'Ali Chishti, Na'im Siddiqi and 'Abdul Sattar Niyazi favoured a purely theological state with significant powers in the hands of Ulama. A contrasting view from all the rest came from the delegates of East Pakistan who emphasized the need for setting up a state with a socialist-secular tenor. Zahid Chaudhri, *Siyasi Tarikh*, 361-3.
75. Quoted in G.W. Choudhury, 'The First Constituent Assembly of Pakistan (1947-1954)', PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 1956, 87.
76. *Ibid.*, 63 and 70.
77. Munir D. Ahmed, 'Pakistan: The Dream of an Islamic State', in Carlo Caldarola, ed. *Religion and Societies: Asia and the Middle East* (Berlin, 1982), 265.
78. Nasr, *Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, 143.
79. During debates in the Constituent Assembly, Begum Shah Nawaz had even remarked that she would have been happy if the word Sunnat had not been there because the word Quran would have been sufficient. Saeed, *Islam and Modernization*, 77.
80. On their part the Ulama neither had the requisite mass support nor a workable or agreed upon blue print for the functioning of a modern state that could force the ruling authorities into submission. Although Shabbir Ahmad 'Usmani, in 1949, was able to use his influence in appointing a committee of Ulama named Board of Ta'limat-i-Islamiyya to assist the Constituent Assembly in the task of drafting an Islamic constitution for the country, the committee's proposal for empowering the Ulama to strike down any law as repugnant to Quran and Sunnat was never considered a serious option. Ulama's unanimous declaration of 22-points for the formation of a welfare Islamic state, too, met a similar fate.
81. The most important example in this regard is that of Family Laws which were promulgated in 1961. These laws, with discussions surrounding their drafting and proposed amendments, have been discussed in detail later in the chapter.
82. S.A. Rahman, *Maqalat-i-Rahman*, ed. Shima Majid (Lahore, 1989), 77 and 109.
83. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* (Lahore), 63, 4:284-5.
84. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* (Lahore), 51, 3:38-9.
85. This is not to deny notable exceptions. One of the most illustrious judges of Pakistani superior courts Justice Cornelius, despite being a Roman Catholic, emphasized the importance of Quran and Hadith as a source of justice in matters of compassion and fundamental rights. For him Shari'at as a *grundnorm* was not a retrograde step. He used to advise the members of the legal fraternity to learn Arabic in order to have a direct access to the sources of Islamic law. Ralph Braibanti, *Chief Justice Cornelius of Pakistan: an Analysis with Letters and Speeches* (Karachi, 2000), 60.
86. Cited in Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*, 248.
87. Rashida Begum vs. Shahab Din, *Pakistan Legal Digest* (1960) Lahore, 1153 and 1166-7.
88. *Ibid.*, 1174.
89. *Ibid.*, 1172.
90. Ishtiaq Ahmad, *Islamic State*, 23.
91. Cf. Professor Dr Ghulam Husayn Zulfikar, *Tarikh-i Bazm-i-Iqbal* (Lahore, 2000), 87. Muhammad Afzal Qarshi, currently the deputy director of the Institute for Islamic Culture, claims to have seen an official document in which Khalifa Abdul Hakim had been directed by the government to describe Iqbal's 'anti-Mulla' approach and

- expound him as a proponent of Islamic modernism. Interview with Muhammad Afzal Qarshi, December 2007, Lahore.
92. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago, 2002) 123. Freeland Abbott has also described the establishment of Institute of Islamic Culture as an effort to publish books expressing modernist views of Islam. Abbott, *Islam and Pakistan* (Ithaca, 1968), 203–10.
  93. Khalifa Abdul Hakim, *Islamic Ideology: The Fundamental Beliefs and Principles of Islam and their Application to Practical Life* (Lahore, 1961), 242–3. In that period, the Institute was not just to present Islam with a liberal face to counteract the influence of Ulama but was also to highlight the progressive aspect of Islam's economic commandments so as to present it as a viable replacement for, and also an ethical to, the Communist ideology. Khalifa wrote: 'An Islamic State would neither be a totalitarian nor a laissez-faire state. The State would leave the individuals free to pursue their individual goals but would certainly interfere where these goals tend to produce an economic or social chaos. .... I must repeat here that no Muslim country is a lover of Russian Communism, because the latter is atheistic and fanatically tyrannical, while every Muslim nation believes in the truth of Islam and considers it as the panacea of all ills ....'

Khalifa Abdul Hakim, *Islam and Communism* (Lahore, 1962), 139 and 226. In their opposition to Communism both the Ulama and the Islamic modernists seemed to share a common ground and were not averse to receiving patronage from state and external sources. According to Ayesha Jalal, the Jamiat Ulama Islam sought financial aid (Rs 10,000) to 'help meet their costs in promulgating the anti-Communist line' as well as Urdu pamphlets on the 'treatment of Muslims' in Russia to demonstrate 'how Islam .... [was being] crushed under the Communist system.' Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge, 1990), 291.
  94. Abdul Hakim, *Islamic Ideology*, 283.
  95. This is not to say that there were no 'conservative' Islamic scholars in the Institute. Ra'is Ahmad Ja'fari and Hanif Nadawi were also among the Institute's research fellows although their contributions during the 1950s published by the Institute fell considerably short of the traditional stance about the powers of the legislation in an Islamic state and that of Islamic Leviathan proposed by Maududi. This is the impression that can be gathered from works like Ra'is Ahmad Ja'fari's *Siyasat-i-Shari'yya* (1959) and Nadawi's *Mas'ala-i-Ijtihad* (1961) in which the traditionally agreed findings about state authority, free thinking and fresh legislations have been put across and argued about in a rather mild tone.
  96. *Al-Bayan* (Lahore) 2, 4 (December 1950): 11–2.
  97. Iftikhar Ahmad Balkhi, *Fitna-i Inkar-i Hadith ka Manzar wa pas Manzar* (Karachi, 1955), 1, 112–4.
  98. Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi, *Jadwaji Zindagi ke liye Aham Qanuni Tajawiz* (Lahore, 1955). One of the reasons for which Ja'far Shah proposed a limited ban on polygamy was that it would help control the population growth as well. His proposals carried favour with members of women activists like Begum Shaista Ikramullah and Salma Tasaddaq Husayn as well. The latter had submitted similar proposals in a legislative draft in 1954 calling upon modifications in various aspects of family laws in the 'spirit' of Quranic injunctions. For Ulama's response to her proposals, cf. Amin Ahsan Islahi, *Maqalat-i-Islahi* (Lahore, 2004), II, 119–20.
  99. Ja'far Shah has enlarged the scope of legislative authority on the rationale that the Islamic Shari'at is not permanent and is open to revision. In case there was a consensus

- on some aspect of Shari'at, it did not mean that a new consensus could not replace it. Even in case of the eternally binding Quranic laws there could be a scope for flexibility. This could be achieved by applying these laws gradually and selectively or lay emphasis on their 'spirit' alone while implementing them. Phulwarwi, *Ijtihadi Masa'il* (Lahore, 1999), 16–7.
100. The principles of policy enumerated by the 1962 constitution had the provision for the elimination of Riba which, in parenthesis, was translated as 'Usury' and not 'Interest'. Fazlur Rahman, 'Some Islamic Issues in the Ayub Khan Era' in Donald P. Little, ed. *Essays on Islamic Civilization: Presented to Niyazi Berkes* (Leiden, 1976), 292.
  101. Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi, *Kamarihal Inqas ki Fiqhi Haysiyyat* (Lahore, 1997). Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti—who worked with Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi at the Institute of Islamic Culture—claims that Ja'far Shah rescinded on this interpretation of Interest in the later part of his life. Bhatti, *Bazm-i-Arjumandan* (Lahore, 2006), 376.
  102. 'Imadi mockingly referred to the case of Indian Muslims where significant Muslim scholars could be found content with accepting the reins of power in the hands of Nehru and Patel. *Al-Bayan* (Lahore) 1, 7 (March 1950): 48–9.
  103. *Al-Bayan* (Lahore) 1, 9 (May 1950): 39.
  104. Altaf Gauhar, *Gauhar Guzisti* (Lahore, 2007), 63. This article on the ideology of Pakistan was written in 1957.
  105. Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters: A Political Autobiography* (London, 1967), 198.
  106. Ayub Khan to Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, 2 July 1960, Islamabad, Parwez Memorial Research Scholars Library, *Ghulam Ahmad Parwez Papers* (hereafter *GAPP*) (emphasis added). The fact that Parwez safely preserved the entire record of his correspondence with Ayub Khan—despite the fact that some aspects of its contents can be considered as 'objectionable' both by his supporters and detractors—is a comment on Parwez's intellectual honesty and a testimony to his genuine belief that cooperation with the Ayub regime was beneficial in the interest of religion and inevitable for his own success as a scholar of Islam.
  107. Parwez to Ayub, July 6, 1960, Lahore, *GAPP*, 7–8.
  108. *Ibid.*, 285.
  109. Ayub Khan, *Friends not Masters*, 195 and 203.
  110. Mumtaz Ahmad has distinguished three different periods in Ayub Khan's policy regarding Islam. In the first period between 1958 and 1962 has been regarded by him as the most progressive component of Ayub's regime during which massive programs of economic modernization and institutional reorganization were undertaken while projecting Islam as a forward-looking religion and vehicle of progressive change. The period between 1962 and 1965 has been described him as the one during which divisive politicking forced Ayub to underscore the value of Islam as a basis of national unity. In the last period between 1965 and 1969, Ayyub Khan is said to have been using Islam to ensure political stability and regime legitimacy. Mumtaz Ahmad, 'Islam and the State: The Case of Pakistan', in Mathew C. Moen and Lowell S. Gustafson, eds. *The Religious Challenge to the State* (Philadelphia, 1992), 240–1. Such a periodization is useful but arbitrary and, as would be shown in this chapter, Ayub Khan continued to espouse his version of Islamic modernism and did extend covert or overt support to institutionalized efforts for curbing 'Mullahism'.
  111. The act was later superseded by Waqf Properties Ordinance of 1961 and Auqaf (Federal Control) Act of 1976. These revisions helped increase the authority of the Auqaf department. Katherine Ewing, 'The Politics of Sufism: Redefining the Saints of Pakistan', in *Journal of Asian Studies* 42, 2 (1983):258.

112. Malik, *Colonization of Islam*, 59.
113. Mumtaz Ahmad, 'Islam and the State', 244. The Auqaf department took many initiatives in this regard: New and attractive pay scales were introduced for the prayer leaders of the government controlled mosques; an Egyptian scholar was engaged to set up an academy for training the Ulama where they were taught courses in history, geography and politics of Pakistan, international affairs, problems of economic development and about unity and harmony among the Muslim sects. Ibid., 245. During the deliberation of 'The Fundamental Conflict' committee, proposals were floated for an enhanced role of the Auqaf department towards increasing the economic and social stature of the Ulama.
114. For details, cf. Muhammad Khalid Masud, 'Apostasy and Judicial Separation in British India' in David S. Powers, Brinkley Messick, and Muhammad Khalid Masud, eds. *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and Their Fatwas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996), 192–203. Reportedly, Maulana Maududi, in view the peculiar conditions of women in British India, did not find objectionable the idea of putting restrictions on the practice of polygamy. Raf'i Ullah Shahab, *Ahkam-ul-Qur'an men Tehrif* (Lahore, 2000), 88.
115. With regard to the role of women and their status, the wife of the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, Begum Ra'na Liaquat Ali Khan, frequently spoke about the rights and freedoms granted to women by Islam and argued for their greater contribution in the social and economic life of the country. Her efforts—and that of other 'elite Begums'—and statements against purdah and other women-discriminatory laws, practices and customs, invited a hostile reaction from conservative quarters. Amin Ahsan Islahi, who at the time was an important member of the Jama'at-i-Islami, wrote a rejoinder to the calls for greater women participation and laid down the 'Islamic guidelines' for women, the duties assigned to her and the rights reserved for her protection. Islahi, *Islami Mu'ashra men 'Aurat ka Maqam* (Lahore, repr. 2001).
116. Women carried out a number of demonstrations. They carried placards with slogans reading: 'Down with Polygamy', 'Go Back Aliya Saddy' and 'You Should Marry A Bachelor'. For other activities of women groups, cf. Sylvia A. Chipp, 'The Role of Women Elites in a Modernizing Country', PhD Thesis, University of Syracuse, 1970, 172.
117. Maulana Ehtasham-ul-Haq Thanawi was the only member of the commission who was trained in traditional scholarship of Islam. The so-called 'non-specialist's' right to draft this report was defended by Khalifa Abdul Hakim in one of his articles published by Idara Saqafat-i-Islamiyya. Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi, ed. *Mas'ala-i Ta'did-i-Ijtihad* (Lahore, 1959), 36.
118. Ehtasham-ul-Haq Thanawi, *'Ahl-i Qawanin aur Iktilafi' Not*, ed. Tanwir-ul-Haq Thanawi (Karachi, 2007), 42. Maulana Ehtasham-ul-Haq Thanawi was the only member to write a dissenting note. He criticized the Commission's understanding of Ijtihad whereby changes had been produced in the established practices of the Muslims. He noted various 'Western influences' on the members of the commission in their opposition to polygamy.
119. What facilitated the women further was the promulgation of West Pakistan Family Courts Act of 1964 which eased the matters relating to matrimonial litigation. Sylvia A. Chipp, 'The Role of Women Elites', 187.
120. Ayesha Jalal, 'The Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State in Pakistan in Deniz Kandiyoti, ed. *Women, Islam and the State* (Basingstoke, 1991), 94. In his criticism of the Family Laws, Mufti Shaf'i—the chief cleric of Deoband in Pakistan lamented that the Prophet's precedent of marrying 9-year old 'Aisha had been

- outlawed by the present laws. This was stated in a detailed letter written by Mufti Shaf'i to Ayub Khan about what he regarded as the un-Islamic provisions of the Family Laws. The contents of Mufti Shaf'i's letter were reprinted in *Bayyinat* (Karachi), ca. March–April 1963. The presidency sent this letter of objection to Ghulam Ahmad Parwez and asked him to draft a response. Qudrat Ullah Shahab to Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, 28 April 1961, Islamabad, *GAPP*.
121. Parwez, *Qayamat-i-Maujud* (Lahore, ca. 2000), 19.
  122. For more details about the suggestions put forward by the Ulama, cf. *Muslim Faymili Laz Ardians par Ulama Karam ka Tabisara* (Lahore, n.d.).
  123. Maulana Muhammad Isma'il al-Salafi, *Fatawa Salafiyya* (Lahore, 1991), 61–3.
  124. *Tulu'i-Islam* (Lahore), August 1962, 18.
  125. Norman Anderson, *Law Reform in the Muslim World* (London, 1976), 76. In 1967, the Council of Islamic Advisory unanimously proposed changes in the provisions relating to orphaned grandchild's right to inheritance. It was suggested that instead of fixing a legal provision for his or her share, a financially strained grandchild should be allowed to seek judicial redress. The proposed amendment, however, could not be made in the actual law for some unknown reasons. For the suggestions made by the members of the Council of Islamic Ideology on various aspects of Family Laws, cf. *Report on Muslim Family Laws* (Islamabad, 1983). Also, Fazlur Rahman, 'Some Islamic Issues in the Ayub Khan Era', 289–90.
  126. *Report on Muslim Family Laws*, 32. It would be pertinent to note that the composition of Council of Islamic Ideology's membership shifted in favour of the Ulama in the 1970s till it became a wholly Ulama-dominated institution because of General Zia-ul-Haq's 'Islamization' drive. Under Ayub Khan, Council's membership was more favourably disposed towards academic and non-madrassa trained scholars of Islam. For details, cf. Malik, *Colonization of Islam*, 291.
  127. Interview with General Mujib-ur-Rahman, January 2008, Islamabad.
  128. See for details about the case and other aspects of Muslim personal law in South Asia, Lucy Carroll, 'The Pakistan Federal Shariat Court, Section 4 of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, and the Orphaned Grandchild', in *Islamic Law and Society* 9, 1 (2002): 70–82. Carroll notes that the same ordinance with all its provisions is still in force in Bangladesh without any amendments.
  129. Even the supposedly liberal English daily *Dawn* sided with the protestors and warned of grave consequences of Fazlur Rahman's policies. Fazlur Rahman, 'Some Islamic Issues in the Ayub Khan Era', 294.
  130. He remarked: 'A certain age of alcoholic content comes to exist even in the drink made from churning milk called *Lassi* in the Punjab, if it is left for a day or so.' *Ten Year Report 1962 to 1972* (Islamabad, n.d.), 59.
  131. Fazlur Rahman, 'Some Islamic Issues in the Ayub Khan Era', 297.
  132. *Ibid.*, 299–300. If the Ulama had been familiar with Dr Fazlur Rahman's English writings on Hadith and Sunnat, they would certainly have found him a 'denier' of both Hadith and Quran. On his part, Rahman has made a sincere effort to 'Islamize' the contents of Schacht's theory which had cast a serious doubt in the minds of many about the historicity of Hadith literature. He does agree with Schacht in disregarding the Prophet as a Pan-legist and finding in his personage more of a social reformer but he does not regard the ancient law schools as totally oblivious of Sunnat. In his opinion, the Sunnat of that period—which he describes as 'living Sunnat'—was a product of meditation upon Prophet's behaviour and precedents set by him and other prominent men in the community, with the exercise of free judgment and reasoning in consonance with the letter and spirit of Quran so as to elaborate the law further



- and validate it for the community as a whole through the agency of Ijma'. In the final analysis both Quran and Sunnat had to be authenticated through Ijma' and not by Hadith as it came to be after Shafi's jurisprudential contributions. In this way the very Schachtian view of the origins of Islamic law and Hadith literature, is 'Islamized' by Rahman as he emphasizes the organic unity between Quran, Sunnat, Ijma' and Ijtihad. Rahman's ideas bear remarkable resemblance with that of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez. As we have seen that both were contemporaries and had unanimity of views on various aspects of Islam but, in all probability, it can still be said that they arrived at such a concept of Sunnat independent of each other. For details about Rahman's ideas on Hadith and Sunnat, cf. Dr Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History* (New Delhi), 1994; Qasmi, 'The History of Hadith Literature'.
133. S.M. Zafar, *Through the Crisis* (Lahore, 1970), 25–6. Zafar half-heartedly tried to defend Fazlur Rahman by saying that he had found nothing objectionable in the book but did not want the same to be reported in the press on his behalf. Fazlur Rahman, 'Some Islamic Issues in the Ayyub Khan Era', 300–01. In his personal diary, Ayub Khan noted the saga surrounding the unseating of a scholarly figure like Rahman with regret. Craig Baxter, ed. *Diaries of Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan 1966–1972* (Karachi, 2007), 253.
  134. The publication of various volumes on Islamic Law by Tanzil-ur-Rahman was one example. The principles on the basis of which Tanzil-ur-Rahman codified these laws, ranked Ahadith next to the Quran along with Tafsir and Fiqh. Dr Tanzil-ur-Rahman, *Majmu'a Qawain-i-Islam*, (Islamabad, 2004), I, 18–9. Many of his findings went against the provisions of the Family Laws. For all these reasons, this work—which was published under the aegis of Islamic Research Institute—was appreciated by the conservative religious quarters as well. It was even suggested by one influential Deobandi journal that this compendium should be promulgated in the country once a council of Ulama has debated its contents extensively and suggested suitable amendments where necessary. Tanzil-ur-Rahman, *Majmu'a Qawain-i-Islam* (Islamabad, 2005), V, appendix. However, it would be interesting to note that the book, in its note of dedication to Iqbal, has quoted from a letter of Iqbal which he had written to Sufi Tabbassum acknowledging Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari's scholarly capabilities for the drafting of a compendium of Islamic law and practices derived from Quran alone.
  135. The inside details of this interaction between the two were first disclosed by Altaf Gauhar when excerpts from his book on Ayub Khan were published in 1983. Parwez was alive at that time and himself wrote in response to refute the growing impression that he ever asked for favours from Ayub Khan for the promotion of his ideas or organization. However, he did admit requesting unsuccessfully for government sanctioned free land for constructing a 'Quranic College' in Lahore. *Tulu-i-Islam* (Lahore), January 1984, 35.
  136. The specific report in question is just two page long and does not carry any title or date but its contents suggest that it was submitted sometime around the promulgation of 1962 constitution. It was probably given to Parwez by his admirer and a key figure during the Martial Law regime Khwaja Shahab-ud-Din (1898–1977). For his brief historical sketch, cf. Ahmad Sa'id, *Muslim India (1857–1947): A Biographical Dictionary* (Lahore, 1997), 301.
  137. The question of withdrawing financial support from Parwez as a sign of government's distancing itself from him did not arise because—as the report noted—Parwez was not receiving any direct support from the government at that time.



138. Only once did Parwez become part of any government body dealing with policy statement on Islam. It happened in 1957 when an Islamic Law Commission was set up as demanded by one of the provisions of 1956 Constitution to make recommendations for bringing the existing laws of the country in concurrence with Islam. Amin Ahsan Islahi was also part of the commission. Because of Parwez's inclusion into it, the commission was mockingly referred to as the 'Parwezi Commission.' The Commission, however, stood abolished with the imposition of Martial Law before it could submit any of its findings. Parwez, *Manzil ba Manzil* (Lahore, 1968), 57.
139. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Lahore), December 1980, 13–14.
140. Parwez's Telegram to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, 11 March 1972 and 14 May 1972, Lahore, GAPP. *Tulu'-i-Islam* organization, even after the death of its mentor, received 'support'—albeit indirectly—during the regime of Pervez Musharraf. It is because Pervez Musharraf's father Musharraf-ud-Din had worked with Ghulam Ahmad Parwez in the Delhi secretariat and held him in high esteem. It is reported that he personally came to attend Parwez's funeral prayers from all the way to Islamabad. Pervez Musharraf's mother, Begum Zarin Musharraf, used to contribute money to the fund set up by *Tulu'-i-Islam*. Pervez Musharraf's maternal aunt Maliha Abdullah Jamal's husband had converted to Islam from Hinduism because of the teachings of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez. Such connections helped *Tulu'-i-Islam* lift ban on some of Parwez's books imposed during Musharraf's regime. Interview with Husain Qaisarani, Manager Idara Tulu'-i-Islam, December 2007, Lahore.
141. This suggestion by *Tulu'-i-Islam* was cited in *Rahiq* (Lahore), November 1957, 3. Parwez expressed a number of similar views which were unabashedly undemocratic and called for centralization of state authority. The most important among these was his condemnations of the party system which he described as a form of *shirk* (associating partners with God). Immediately after the independence, Parwez recommended that the Muslim League, having served its purpose of achieving a homeland for the Muslims, should be dissolved as a political party. He argued that there did not exist any scope for party system in an Islamic state as there was no concept in Islam of extending governmental powers and functions to the members of one party alone and deprive the non-members from sharing it. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Karachi), May 1948, 91. Also, on matters of the federal nature of the state, Parwez was supportive of the one-unit scheme and powerful central government and regarded centrifugal pulls on the basis of sub-nationalisms or ethnic identities as recipe for disaster. What *Tulu'-i-Islam* favoured was a unitary, presidential form of government established in the name of Allah's sovereignty. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Karachi), February 1951, 23–40.
142. Interview with General Mujib-ur-Rahman, January 2008, Islamabad. General Mujib, like his brother, greatly admired Parwez's writings. He headed the information ministry for a considerable number of years under the Zia regime. Given the hard line Islamic tone of the Zia's regime, there was nothing much that General Mujib could have done to favour Parwez. But it was an achievement in itself that Parwez was able, at least once to my knowledge, to deliver a lecture on Quran on the Pakistan Television. At one occasion, General Mujib used his official influence to force daily *Nawa-i-Waqt*—a major Urdu daily—to print a couple of articles in favour of Parwez after a column against him written by Ata-ul-Haq Qasmi had been published in the same newspaper. Interview with Ata-ul-Haq Qasmi, December 2007, Lahore.
143. Parwez to Ayub, 30 August 1959, (Lahore), GAPP, 1.
144. Parwez to Ayub, 15 September 1961, (Lahore), GAPP, 4.

145. Baxter, ed. *Diaries*, 65. The meeting took place on 20 February 1967. The particular writing of Parwez mentioned by Ayub Khan is probably the pamphlet titled *Mao Ze Tung aur Qur'an* (Lahore, Sept. 1990).
146. Parwez to Ayub, 19 September 1959, Lahore, *GAPP*, 3. In one letter to Qudrat Ullah Shahab, Parwez complained that the fiscal plan for the propagation of Quranic literature still awaited approval and that the matter of inclusion of Parwez's books in the syllabi had not been resolved. Parwez to Shahab, 1 September 1960, Lahore, *GAPP*. He again raised the issue of funds while writing to Ayub Khan about the progress he had made in preparing several tracts and distributing them extensively. They dealt with such topics as Islamic Ideology, Quranic Economics, Political System of Islam etc. Parwez to Ayub, 10 March 1960, Lahore, *GAPP*. With regard to printing press, however, it should be noted that Parwez was able to establish Al-Mizan publications—a private limited company—in the 1960s with the initial capital of about 54,000 rupees contributed by some of his affluent followers from Karachi. The Al-Mizan publications had to be scrapped up some years later because of the mutually acrimonious relationship between Parwez and the managers of the Al-Mizan publications on financial affairs of the company. For details, cf. 'Abul Rahman Kilani, *A'ina-i-Parwezīyat* (Lahore, 2004), 873–4.
147. Parwez has noted on the margin of this letter that 'no secret job has been assigned to me.' D.O.No.10/1/63-Accounts(I), 27 May 1964, Islamabad, *GAPP*. Parwez was sent a reminder letter on 29 June 1964 in which he was asked to acknowledge that the bank draft has been received by him. Parwez sent an acknowledgment receipt and promised to write a detailed reply after resuming his normal activities following an operation he had undergone. Parwez to Amanat Ali (Section Officer), 2 July 1964, Lahore, *GAPP*.
148. Parwez to Ayub, 6 August 1964, Lahore, *GAPP*. Parwez's 'codification of Quran' project had been in the pipeline for many years before it was finally published in the 1960s. Ayub, too, used to think about the need for and utility of such a work. Qudrat Ullah Shahab, *Shahab Nama* (Lahore, 2000), 722. The 'literature in English probably refers to Parwez's only work in that language, titled *Islam: A Challenge to Religion* (Lahore, 1968).
149. Parwez to Brigadier F.R. Khan, 5 November 1959, Lahore, *GAPP*. A similar lack of interest by the Bureau was expressed when it refused to sponsor the publication by Tulu'-i-Islam of a tract on family planning. Bureau of National Reconstruction to Idara Tulu'-i-Islam, D.O.No.32-65/60-CR, 29 December 1960, Islamabad, *GAPP*.
150. At the time when Parwez had not completely renounced the Hadith literature, Maududi supported his doctrine of Hadith which stipulated that more scrutiny of Hadith literature was possible and additions could be made to the research already done by the previous Traditionists. Idara Tulu'-i-Islam, *Maqam-i-Hadith* (Karachi, ca. 1953), I, 88.
151. Most of these themes were effectively dealt with in a booklet published by Idara Tulu'-i-Islam entitled *Qatl-i-Murtad, Ghulami aur Laundiyan aur Yatim Potay ki Wirsat* (Lahore, 1986).
152. *Mizaj Shanas-i-Rusul* (Lahore, 1996), 92.
153. *Maqam-i-Hadith*, Karachi, ca. 1953, II, 412.
154. Nazim Idara Tulu'-i-Islam to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2 November 1959, Lahore, 2. The ministry initially showed interest in purchasing a number of copies of the proposed book but the initial enthusiasm seemed to have waned when Parwez expressed his displeasure in a letter to Brigadier F. R. Khan for backing out of the understanding reached between them whereby the publication cost

- of the new book was agreed to be paid by the government. Parwez to Brigadier E.R. Khan, 22 December 1959, Lahore, *GAPP*. Nevertheless, a thin volume comprising of well argued articles on Maududi's ideas of Jihad, slavery, concubines, apostasy and property rights was published by Idara Tulu'-i-Islam in June 1962.
155. S.E.H. Faizi, Senior Research Officer Bureau of National Research and Reference, to Parwez, 5 June 1965, Islamabad, *GAPP*.
  156. The proposals titled as 'Measures to Curb the Activities of Jama'at-i-Islami, was attached as an appendix to a letter. Cf. Parwez to Ayub Khan, 9 June 1967, Lahore, *GAPP*.
  157. Parwez, too, was aware of that. In a letter to Ayub Khan, written probably after September 1968, Parwez admitted that the opposition might target Ayub for his association with Parwez even though he, unlike Fazlur Rahman whose case had been 'settled' by then, was never officially part of any government organization.
  158. Parwez to Ayub Khan, 6 February 1965, Lahore, *GAPP*. (emphasis added) The idea of distributing Tulu'-i-Islam literature through the platform of Muslim League was discussed between the two for a brief while. Ayub Khan had offered to speak to Nawabzada Abdul Ghafur Khan of Muslim League in this regard. Parwez to Ayub, 24 November 1967, Lahore, *GAPP*.
  159. S. Fida Hassan to Parwez, 5 August 1966, Islamabad. *GAPP*, No.D.7134-Pre/66. In 1967, a Quranic Education Society, set up by the Tulu'-i-Islam, approached the Governor West Punjab, Revenue Department, Auqaf Department and Evacuee Trust Board to request them for allocation of 50 acres of government land for the construction of a Quranic College. The land was finally acquired in the late 1970s with a payment of Rs 400,000. Half of the acquired land was to make up one Ahbab Cooperative Housing Society and the sale of its plots was to finance the construction of the Quranic College. The proposed college, however, could not be built as the stakeholders lost interest after the death of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez.
  160. *Parwez ke bare men Ulama ka Mutafiqqa Fatwa* (Karachi, ca. 1961).
  161. Parwez to Ayub Khan, 15 March 1962, Lahore, *GAPP*. All these concerns were unfounded. There has never been a serious demand or an effort on the part of Ulama to get the 'Parwezis' declared non-Muslims although in some Middle Eastern countries the literature of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez has been banned. The closest Pakistani government came to evaluating the status of 'Parwezis' was in 1999 when the then religious affairs minister Raja Zafar-ul-Haq asked the advice and opinion of Ulama about the status of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez and his followers as Muslims. Rehmat Ullah Tariq, *Qur'an ka Mu'ashī Nazariyya* (Lahore, 2002), 46. It is rumoured that this campaign was launched as part of a strategy to remove General Parwez Musharraf from the post of army chief by accusing him of practicing 'Parwezi faith' and, hence, unfit to hold the coveted position on account of his religious affiliations stamped as un-Islamic by the state. Interview with Hussain Qaisrani, December 2007.
  162. Martin Lau, *The Role of Islam in the Legal System of Pakistan* (Leiden, 2006), p. 7, fn. 14.
  163. S.M. Zafar, *Through the Crisis*, 23–4. Parwez had warned of a similar threat to Ayub Khan after the 1965 presidential elections when he pointed to the increasing numbers of seminaries and their graduates and the fact that the religious Mullahs were the ones to vote against him. He attributed this to the flawed government policy to allow *Auqaf* money to be used for building madrasas and for incorporating into the constitution the provision for the inclusion of Sunnat as one of the sources for Islamic law. Parwez to Ayub, 6 February 1965, Lahore, *GAPP*.
  164. Ayub Khan, *Friends not Masters*, ix. (emphasis added)

165. Interview with S.M. Zafar, 18 January 2008, Lahore.
166. 'Meetings of the Governor's Conference 23–25 February, 1967: Minutes', Case No. GC8/1/67, *GAPP*, 2. This preliminary meeting was attended by the Ministers of Information, Foreign Affairs and Law along with important members of the government machinery like Qudrat Ullah Shahab, Altaf Gauhar and Fazlur Rahman. Ghulam Ahmad Parwez was especially invited and inducted as a non-official member of this project.
167. 'Committee on Fundamental Conflict', 17 April 1967, *GAPP*, 2–3. (emphasis added)
168. 'Minutes', *GAPP*, 4.
169. *Ibid.*, 2.
170. *Ibid.*, 4–5. A paper titled 'Making the Mullah Useful in the Process of Nation Building' with the sub-heading 'Winning Over or Neutralizing the Die-Hard Section of the Mullah' was circulated among the members of the project for the Fundamental Conflict. The paper, which had probably been written by Dr Fazlur Rahman, gave similar suggestions regarding the co-option of Mullahs.
171. This was stated in Ghulam Ahmad Parwez's article titled 'Fundamental Conflict' which was distributed among the members of the committee for their perusal. Parwez, 'Fundamental Conflict', *GAPP*, 28.
172. 'Summary for the Governor's Conference: The Fundamental Conflict', Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, *GAPP*, 4.
173. 'Committee on Fundamental Conflict', Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 17 April 1967, *GAPP*, 7. S.M. Zafar told the author that his stance was supported by most of the others present during the session. He was appreciated for boldly challenging the parameters of the project by the then Governor of West Pakistan Nawab Malik Amir Muhammad Khan of Kalabagh. Interview with S.M. Zafar, 18 January 2008, Lahore. Zafar believes that the votaries of the Fundamental Conflict did not take the scrapping up of the project too kindly. In order to emphasize their point in favour of taking on the Mullah, they did not take sufficient steps to quell the agitation against Dr Fazlur Rahman and allowed it to reach a level where there was no left no option for Rahman but to resign. S.M. Zafar, *Through the Crisis*, 25–6.
174. Martin Lau remarks: 'The paucity of reported cases involving an explicit recognition of Islam as an additional source of law indicates that in the 1950s and 1960s judges were still able and willing to reject any express reliance on Islamic law. The areas of law occupied by Islamic law were confined to family law, which had continued to be governed by the British Indian system of personal laws.' Lau, *The Role of Islam*, 11.

# 7

## Concluding Remarks

The purpose of the present study has been to offer an insight into the hitherto unexplored history of the Ahl al-Qur'an groups and their contributions to the discourse in South Asian Islam on modernity, reform, rationality, individual self and other related themes. By foregrounding the theorization on the Isnad paradigm, the study has shown how the authority of the past has been negotiated with and for what ends. In case of the former objective, the responses on the part of the Ahl al-Qur'an scholars have been shown to vary from an absolute severance of historical connectivity—and, hence, a concomitant discarding of the vast corpus of Islamic literature on jurisprudence and religious guidance in the form of Hadith, Tafsir and Fiqh—to attempts on their part to construct a discursive space allowing possible questioning, revisioning and limiting of the sources of authority derived from the past. However, the authority of the past most contested is that of the Prophet and his words and actions as recorded in Hadith collections. While the question of Prophet's authority and authenticity of Hadith literature is a settled one for the proponents of Hadith, the Ahl al-Qur'an seek to reappraise the notion of whether the Prophet had, in the first place, any authority outside that of the strict precincts of the Quran and whether Hadith or Sunnat are authentic means and reliable vehicles of its transmission for authoritatively defining the beliefs and determining the practices of the present-day Muslims.

An inevitably related concern has been to ascertain the relative significance of the Quran and Hadith as the sources for Islamic religious traditions. The consideration of these postulates has been the differentiating line between the various Ahl al-Qur'an groups and scholars and the other Muslim sects and Ulama. Among Ahl al-Qur'an themselves the groups and individuals are distinctly demarcated from one another on the basis of their respective approaches to these questions. The diversity

of approaches attending to the resolution of questions central to the thematic and dogmatic concerns of Ahl al-Quran, has been one of the primary issues focused upon in this study. For this purpose the writings—and the historical context in which they originated—of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi, Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari, Aslam Jayrajpuri and Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, along with many others espousing similar intellectual trends, have been discussed.

The study has shown that Sayyid Ahmad Khan primarily laid down a criterion based on content-analysis to sift authentic traditions from fabricated ones but did not come too close to professing an outright rejection of the whole corpus of Hadith and limitation of the Prophet's role and authority in dictating the terms of strictly religious beliefs and practices. Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi, on the other hand, thought of the Prophet as entrusted with the task of relaying the Divine message. Only Maulwi 'Abdullah, and those like Mistri Muhammad Ramazan who followed his line, had a peculiar view about the comprehensiveness of the Quran as a Divine code encompassing all the spheres of religious life including ritual observances. Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari expressed similar views on the Hadith records, the Prophet's authority and his humanness but did not find fault with the prevalent modes of ritual observances—whether Sunnat based or inferred 'purely' from the Quran more recently by Maulwi 'Abdullah. For him the external form or the mode of worship mattered for little. Aslam Jayrajpuri offered a compromise between contrasting trends of thought within the Ahl al-Qur'an by remaining sceptical of Hadith and restraining the authority of the Prophet in most of the affairs while allowing for the continuation of prevalent ritual practices on the account of their consonance with the continuous practice of the Ummah for centuries. But his own disciple Ghulam Ahmad Parwez did not rule out the possibility of revision of these practices even though in many of his other writings on Hadith, Prophet and the Quran, Parwez did not deviate too greatly from the ideas propounded by Aslam Jayrajpuri. There were others among the Ahl al-Qur'an like Tamanna 'Imadi—and to a lesser extent Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi—who tended to be on the fringes of pro-Hadith group of Ulama but could still be classified under the category of Ahl al-Qur'an scholars for accepting unreservedly the arbitration of the Quran in the ascertainment of authentic traditions, carrying out an intensive scrutiny of Hadith literature on the basis of Isnad, questioning the credibility of previously undisputed scholars of Hadith as Shahab Zuhri, and refusing to accept a large number of traditions which are commonly accepted by



the vast majority of Ulama and are relevant to detailing important aspects of Muslim faith and history.

The consequences intended and those accruing inadvertently from the pursuance of these revisionist approaches by different Ahl al-Qur'an groups and individual scholars exhibit a similar variety. Sayyid Ahmad Khan's main purpose was to shield the reputation of the Prophet from the insulting remarks being made against his personage on the basis of Hadith and Sirat literature in biographies penned by the Orientalists. These writings were influential upon the religious worldview of the swelling ranks of college-educated Muslim middle classes and intelligentsia in North India. Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi was less concerned with highlighting the 'objectionable content' of the Hadith literature and more inclined towards establishing the reputation of the Quran as the only and the most comprehensive embodiment of Divine guidance pertaining to all spheres of life and religious dogmas and practices. Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din Amritsari's intellectual endeavour was for the projection of Islam as a Universal religion in which reverence for a single Prophet held little significance. The ideas proffered by Ghulam Ahmad Parwez—inspired from those of his mentor Aslam Jayrapuri—were meant to strengthen the role of the state in the revitalization of Muslim society by undermining the influence of regressive religious forces deriving their legitimacy from the Isnad paradigm. Likewise Tamanna 'Imadi and Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi—who were relatively closer to the traditional stance on Hadith than the other Ahl al-Qur'an scholars—sought a scope for fresh legislation in Islam and the possible revisioning of the jurisprudential stock of the past.

Hence, in this way, the disparate ends sought and the variety of approaches adopted for their realization engendered multiple new dimensions in the ongoing discourse on reform in South Asian Islam. The discourse is still being carried forward and some of its aspects are becoming increasingly important for the larger sections of the Muslim population. The new entrants in the field have their inspiration from the figures discussed in this study and they, in some way or the other, operate within the framework specified by their preferred predecessors.

### 7.1. RECENT TRENDS AMONG THE AHL AL-QUR'AN MOVEMENTS

In order for the Ahl al-Qur'an trends to gain wider success, it has not been lost upon its recent proponents that a complete disregard for the

Prophet, his authority and the record of his words, sayings and actions in the form of Hadith, invokes a negative reaction. However, there still continue to exist remnants of those Ahl al-Qur'an groups that espouse ideas in the mould of 'Abdullah Chakralawi, i.e. Quran-only ideas. The non-acceptability of these ideas and their ideologues among the large sections of Muslim population is evidenced by the marginalization of the Ahl al-Qur'an groups upholding them.

### 7.1.1. IDARA BALAGH-UL-QUR'AN

One prominent example is that of Idara Balagh-ul-Qur'an. The group and its journal was initially started by Mistri Muhammad Ramazan in 1920s. The journal renewed its publication in 1955 under the editorship of Ramazan's son Muhammad Isma'il (1915–80) and the assistance of Master Muhammad Ali Rusul Nagari (1902–82). Since then the journal has been in continuous publication under different editorial set ups. The group maintains a small mosque in Lahore where weekly gatherings are held on Friday and 'Qurani Namaz' is offered in accordance with the one laid down by Muhammad Ramazan several decades ago. Balagh-ul-Qur'an has also set up a 'Quranic board of Ulama which is responsible for writing the commentary of Quran.<sup>1</sup> The number of Balagh-ul-Qur'an followers does not exceed a few dozen. Still, it is better off than other groups with similar religious outlooks for the fact that it has its own mosque and has been able to publish its journal on a regular basis.<sup>2</sup>

### 7.1.2. OTHER AHL AL-QUR'AN GROUPS

Smaller Ahl al-Qur'an groups, other than Balagh-ul-Quran, have little institutional set up and organizational resources at their disposal. They include Hizb-ul-Muslimin,<sup>3</sup> Tehrik-i Ta'mir-i-Insaniyyat,<sup>4</sup> Anjuman Irtqa'-i-Ummat,<sup>5</sup> Markaz-i Tehqiqat-i-Islami,<sup>6</sup> and various individual scholars. What is common to these organizations is that their 'membership' is confined almost to their respective patrons alone and the untenability of their views excludes them from bearing an impact on the discourse on Hadith.<sup>7</sup> Their contributions have not been considered worthy of a serious response by the proponents of Hadith. Apart from these, there are a number of individuals and groups based in Europe and North America which cherish similar ideals but do not necessarily trace their links to the Ahl al-Qur'an figures discussed in this study.

### 7.1.3. RAF'I ULLAH SHAHAB

Some of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez's colleagues and aides at Tulu'-i-Islam continued with his ideas albeit with some attenuation. Raf'i Ullah Shahab—a former professor of Arabic at Government College University Lahore—is one such example. Shahab worked for Parwez's Tulu'-i-Islam and contributed many articles especially against Maulana Maududi and Jama'at-i-Islami.<sup>8</sup> In his other works published after the death of Parwez, Raf'i Ullah Shahab did not reiterate the efforts for the exposition of Parwez's ideas of Islamic state and socio-economic order.<sup>9</sup> He simply limited himself to offering the 'Quranic perspective' on various issues—most importantly women's rights, as can be seen in many of his writings for Urdu journals and English dailies—and indexing its jurisprudential injunctions.<sup>10</sup> In pursuance of the latter theme, Shahab emphasized the sufficiency of Quranic text in matters of basic jurisprudential guidelines so as to mitigate the importance of non-Divine sources of guidance. But for that he did not revoke the authorities of the past altogether; rather, he quoted from various Ahadith, exegetical comments and jurisprudential findings of classical scholars to justify the reading and understanding of particular Quranic verses in ways that were in consonance with his own predilections—especially on the issues of women's right, free thinking, slavery, war, socio-economic justice and so on—and, purportedly, in compatibility with Quran.

### 7.1.4. 'UMAR AHMAD 'USMANI

A similar but more comprehensive effort in this regard has been made by 'Umar Ahmad 'Usmani in his 8-volume compendium of Quranic jurisprudence. 'Usmani was an important member of Parwez's team of scholars. His scholarly credentials and training in traditional Islamic sciences from reputed seats of learning set aside, the fact that he was a scion of an influential Deobandi family added considerably to his worth as a 'convert' to Ahl al-Qur'an. His father Zafar Ahmad 'Usmani was a renowned Deobandi scholar whose *magnum opus* was an exhaustive 21-volume commentary on various aspects of Hadith and Sunnat.<sup>11</sup> Ashraf Ali Thanawi, the best of Deoband's Sufi scholars, held 'Umar Ahmad 'Usmani in high esteem and his initiation into the Sufi orders.<sup>12</sup> In 1937–8, 'Usmani attended Quranic lectures delivered by Aslam Jayrajpurī in Delhi, where he was studying during that period. This introduced him to Jayrajpurī's version of Ahl al-Qur'an concepts and gave him a chance to interact with Ghulam Ahmad Parwez. Parwez and 'Usmani maintained

contact through correspondence over the subsequent years. 'Usmani respected Parwez as a learned scholar and was in agreement with him on several of his views but he did have his reservations over some, and outrightly disagreed with some.<sup>13</sup> After 1947, as Tulu'-i-Islam was established and a certain amount of financial security, Parwez succeeded in convincing 'Usmani to give up his teaching job in East Bengal and work for the journal. Later during his career, 'Usmani joined a local college in Karachi and during the last few years of his life busied himself with writing the volumes of *Fiqh al-Qur'an*.

The principles enumerated by 'Usmani for the compilation of Quranic jurisprudence were not dissimilar from those propounded by Raf'i Ullah Shahab. He saw little incompatibility between most of the jurisprudential guidance offered by the Quran and that derived from Hadith and codified in the form of Fiqh. Wherever such an incongruity was to be found, 'Usmani conveniently ignored the Hadith and the Fiqh in the favour of the Quran. But most significantly it was with relation to details of ritual practices that 'Usmani deviated considerably from traditional stance on Hadith and Fiqh and drew himself closer to the most controversial of Ahl al-Qur'an figures such as Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi. This is clearly evident in 'Usmani's writings on the prayer rituals. He accepted the prevalent mode of ritual observances as for its conformity with the Sunnat-i-Mutwatir but proceeded to furnish supplementary evidence from the Quran to drive home the point that the Prophet—while determining the various postures and recitations for Namaz—exercised his personal judgment as well in distilling such details from various Quranic verses. So even if the prescribed mode for Namaz had a divine sanction it did not mean that it was based on a source of guidance whose content was exclusive for the Prophet alone. He noted that the various ritual postures prescribed for Namaz had been stressed upon by the Quran at different parts of the text. It was only that their order had not been sequenced. But in that case it followed naturally that a worshipper would have to start from an upright position and that prostration would have to be at the end of the act of prayer.<sup>14</sup> With regard to the Hadith literature, 'Usmani undertook considerable scrutiny of the contents of those traditions narrating details of Muhammad's (ﷺ) life and other aspects of Muslim history. These are the details which have proved to be the most controversial component of the Hadith literature. In order to rebut propaganda based on these controversies, 'Usmani—like Sayyid Ahmad Khan—employed the technique of *darayai* to suggest suitable amendments in the details of a particular event.

## 7.2. RECENT TRENDS REGARDING HADITH AMONG 'TRADITIONAL' ULAMA

### 7.2.1. DISCARDING 'OBJECTIONABLE' AHADITH AS SHI'A 'CONSPIRACIES'

A concern for 'non-objectionable' narration of the Prophet's personal life and the character of his wives and the Muslim history in general and the Companions in particular in recent years, precipitated interesting responses from the Ahl al-Qur'an and—more importantly and surprisingly—from some quarters of conservative Ulama. What has driven some of the adherers of these mutually irreconcilable religious dogmas to a point of unanimity on the inadmissibility of certain portions of Hadith literature is the alleged utilization of these objectionable traditions by Shiites to malign the reputation of some of the Companions and the wives of the Prophet and thereby undermine the edifice of Sunni Islam itself. This is evidenced by some virulently anti-Shi'a books which have been written in the past few decades in which the use of Hadith has been selective.<sup>15</sup> One example is that of *Hayat-i-Sayyidina Yazid* (The Biography of Noble Yazid), written by a Deobandi scholar Abul Husayn Muhammad Azim-ud-Din Siddiqi, in which Yazid—the most despised figure among both the Sunnis and the Shi'as for his treacherous role in the tragic killing of Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn and his family—has been eulogized on the basis of certain Ahadith in his favour which are normally considered to be of weak *isnad* by the rest of the Muslim scholars.<sup>16</sup> Ja'far Shah Phulwarwi wrote an introduction for this highly controversial book and appreciated the efforts of the author to bring out 'true historical facts'.<sup>17</sup> Earlier in the 1970s, Phulwarwi had become the president of a Sunni Council which had a narrow sectarian outlook. The Council had been formed in response to the approval granted by the Pakistani government for separate syllabi of religious studies for the Sunni and the Shi'a students.<sup>18</sup> Another prominent example in the literature of this kind is that of *Mazhabi Dastanain* (Religious Fables) by another Deobandi scholar, Habib-ur-Rahman Kandhalvi in which the author has objected to several traditions, unanimously accepted by both the Sunnis and the Shiites, in the favour of the Prophet's progeny. He cited objection to even those traditions in which the Prophet is reported to have praised the efforts and contributions of 'Ali—the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law; the fourth of the Rightly Guided Muslim caliphs; and the central figure in Shi'a faith—for the cause of Islam or displayed his affection for his grandchildren Hasan and Husayn.<sup>19</sup> All those traditions which cast a



negative light on those opposed to the Prophet's family and involved in its killing have also been summarily dismissed by Habib-ur-Rahman Kandhalvi.<sup>20</sup> In similar writings—published under the supervision of Mufti Tahir Makki—on the 'family of the Prophet', it has been suggested that the Prophet's 'real' progeny is from the grandchildren of his other daughter married to the third Muslim Caliph, 'Usman. Contrary to what has been described in classical Arab histories and Hadith reports as well, it has been asserted that the Prophet's grandchildren from 'Usman lived a long life and there are countless among the Muslims today who claim their ancestry from them.<sup>21</sup> The distinguishing feature between the Ahl al-Qur'an and Ulama such as Habib-ur-Rahman Kandhalvi is that the latter's scepticism of Hadith is limited to a certain aspect of Hadith literature and is not accompanied with a corresponding concern for discussing the question of the Prophet's authority in the derivation of religious guidance, or ascertaining its status in relation to the Quran. What sets these Ulama apart from the rest is their failure to apply traditional canons of Hadith criticism in purging its vast corpus of presumably objectionable narratives.

It should also be noted that most of these ideas are neither supported by the large majority of the Deobandi Ulama nor is Hadith the exclusive factor fuelling sectarian disharmony in the case of Shiites and Sunnis.<sup>22</sup> There is considerable acrimony among the Barelwi, Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadith Sunni groups themselves. They continue to exchange indignant charades of accusations of deviation from the perfect Prophetic model of human behaviour and religious conduct as cited in the Hadith collections.<sup>23</sup>

### 7.3. CRITICS OF ISNAD PARADIGM AMONG THE PROPONENTS OF HADITH AND CHALLENGES FOR ULAMA

As discussed in this study, it is not that the Ulama do not accept the theoretical possibility of any further scrutiny of Hadith literature within the strict precincts of traditional Islamic scholarship. It is just that their utmost reverence for the services of the classical traditionists implies that, in practice, nothing worthwhile can be added to the scholarly findings of these figures from the distant past, whose piety and scholarship cannot be matched by the present-day Ulama. Also, the apprehension of deepening of sectarian schisms precludes them from undertaking such a responsibility. So it effectively suggests that the authentic collections of Ahadith—especially the *Sihah Satta*—are outside the scope of further



rigorous scrutiny and only the books of lesser status can be selectively reviewed. Such an approach, while keeping a cap on the more important and controversial sources of Hadith literature, allows for limited criticism of weaker Ahadith collections on the basis of *isnad* and hence helps to keep alive the impression that Hadith criticism is an ongoing, progressive field of enquiry regardless of what the Ahl al-Qur'an and other detractors might suggest.<sup>24</sup> The Ulama miss the point that it is the authentic collections of Ahadith and not the weaker ones that the Ahl al-Qur'an is striving to be rescrutinized within the folds of a more critically analytical framework. The reason for this is that in the opinion of Ahl al-Qur'an scholars, not much work has been done to sift the authentic and fabricated from the text of these authentic traditions and much of it has been accepted uncritically by later-day Muslim scholars and the general Muslim populace.

### 7.3.1. CONTROVERSIES ARISING FROM 'VULGAR' TRADITIONS

In view of some recent developments that have taken place in the discourse on Islamic reform, it appears that it would become increasingly difficult for the Ulama supporting the Ahadith collections uncritically to retain their dogmatic views without, at least some, revision. Most recently the Turkish government's religious ministry has ordered the appointment of a competent board of Ulama to re-evaluate the Hadith literature and focus especially on its objectionable moral and political aspects.<sup>25</sup> In another recent development Ezzat Atiya, an Egyptian scholar of Hadith studies at the prestigious Al-Azhar University of Cairo, has generated a lot of controversy by issuing a *fatwa* on the basis of a certain Hadith calling upon working women to breastfeed their male colleagues because that would lead to some kind of filial relationship which would make 'it legal for the woman to sit alone with that man at a closed workplace. This way, the woman can take off her veil in front of her work-mate without being in violation of Islamic rulings.'<sup>26</sup> Traditions like these and others relating to Prophet's marriage with a 'nine-year-old' and intimate details of his marital life shock the moral sensibilities of large number of Muslims and are central to the themes discussed in various web forums, television talk shows and 'Muslim apologetic literature'. The key feature of this kind of literature is that the Islam is 'defended' by questioning the historicity of certain traditions rather than revoking the authority of the Prophet altogether or severing linkages to his personage which exist in the form of Hadith.

### 7.3.2. CHOOSING BETWEEN ISNAD PARADIGM AND 'MODERNITY PARADIGM'

As pointed out, for Ulama, discarding one authentic tradition—no matter what the content of that tradition is and the moral-ethical and political implications it might entail—effectively amounts to admitting lapses in the compilation of Hadith literature and the possibility of revocation or, at least, revision of the entire corpus on the basis of some new criteria which takes into cognizance the dictates of modern times. It is because such a prospect not only damages the reputation of those learned scholars who compiled the books of Ahadith and sceptically questions their selection criteria but also constrains the spatial-temporal relevance of Divine guidance (in the form of *wahi ghayr matlu*) by allowing it to be determined and interpreted in consonance with the modernity which, for Ulama, is essentially a 'Western' phenomenon. Thus, the Ulama perceive that they face a dilemma of choosing between the Isnad and a so-called modernity paradigm. By preferring to stick to the former without any changes whatsoever, the Ulama run the risk of gradually heightening their alienation from the burgeoning Muslim middle classes whose religious worldview has invariably been shaped by their non-madrasa educational background and exposure to influences of modernity—and especially to its discourses on human rights, freedom and other related issues—through a variety of means. It is because the Ulama offering of 'logical explanations' for the controversial aspects of Hadith literature and attempts at contextualizing their historical-social setting are not convincing enough for someone not embedded in, or familiar with, the whole epistemological apparatus of traditional scholarship of Islamic studies. Rather such explanations serve to make the acceptance of a certain notion derived from a supposedly Divine source more conducive on the basis of belief or as a matter of faith and on the pretext that the human intellect cannot possibly fathom the rationale behind it. In the end it is left to the moral, rational and religious sense of the individuals to appropriately prioritize between faith and reason to reconcile modern sensibilities with traditional moral-ethical worldviews. The variety of responses from Ulama available in multiple mediums—printed literature, audio-video lectures and internet discussion forums—ensures that individuals have sufficient resources available while exercising personal judgment in resolving the matters of religious controversy in favour of their preferred proclivity. On the other hand an acquiescence to the influence of, what the Ulama describe as 'Western modernity', would validate an extended embrace within its

revisionist fold all those sources of authority from the past—and not just the ‘embarrassing’ historical narratives and biographical details—which define the Isnad paradigm in the matters of religious beliefs and practices.

### 7.3.3. SHABBIR AHMAD AZHAR MIRATHI

The ideas of some modern-day critics of Hadith literature needs to be evaluated to appraise the theoretical concerns cited by Ulama. The writings of Shabbir Ahmad Azhar Mirathi and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi are worth mentioning in this regard.<sup>27</sup> Mirathi is a Deoband trained scholar residing in India who, like Tamanna ‘Imadi, has exceptional expertise in making an intensive Isnad-based criticism of Hadith literature. His focus has been on the most authentic of all the Hadith collections, i.e. *Sahih Bukhari*. In a comprehensive two-volume critique of *Sahih Bukhari*, Mirathi has focused on the individual narrators of tradition to trace possible forgeries in the narration of traditions. He justifies his revisioning of *Sahih Bukhari*, when other competent Ulama have refrained from doing so, on the pretext that an exaggerated estimate of Bukhari’s work and projection of his image as an almost infallible scholar have prevented a critical study of his work in the past.<sup>28</sup> Shabbir Ahmad Azhar Mirathi does not only highlight what he describes as some obvious shortcomings in scholarship and judgmental errors of the learned traditionist, but also focuses on those flawed aspects of *Sahih Bukhari*’s text which are more obscure and require mastery in traditional Islamic epistemology on Hadith for their exposure. By critiquing *Sahih Bukhari*, Mirathi does in no way revisits the question of the divine status of Hadith or the authority of the Prophet to serve as a religious guide for the Muslims. Hence, he successfully demonstrates how the authority of the past in selective domains can be challenged without necessarily undermining or abolishing it.

### 7.3.4. JAWED AHMAD GHAMIDI

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi on the other hand, aptly described as a critical traditionist than an Islamic modernist,<sup>29</sup> is more out of synchrony with the religious ideas of traditional Ulama. Following his mentor Amin Ahsan Islahi, Ghamidi stresses utmost importance upon the Holy Quran, which is then followed by the Sunnat which he describes as those practices and traditions of the Abrahamic faith which were revived and reformed

by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).<sup>30</sup> For the transmission and preservation of this Sunnat among the Muslims, the efforts undertaken were not dissimilar from those with respect to the collection and dissemination of the Quran. But other than the Quran and Sunnat there is no other source of religious guidance that can authoritatively determine the articles of faith and modes of ritual observances. By crediting Abraham as the originator of current ritual practices among the Muslims, Ghamidi mitigates the importance of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) without intending any insult to his figure. This, coupled with the fact that the Abrahamic Sunnat comprises mainly of details about ritual purification and social etiquettes and nothing significant about postulates of law or principles of state and governance, allows for considerable scope for a new jurisprudential codification and legislation.

Thus, it can be said that the critics of tradition among the present-day Ulama vary in their approach and intensity of criticism towards the Isnad paradigm and the way in which they allow themselves to be guided by the influences and circumstantial compulsions of modernity in today's world. With respect to the incorporation of Islamic traditions within the ambit of discourse on Islamic reform, such Ulama are likely to differ on the limits of inclusion. These considerations, in turn, would determine the extent to which the prognosis of the proponents of Hadith regarding an absolute or partial severance with the past ensuing from revising the Isnad paradigm would be fulfilled. Of most interest would be the impact of this discourse on the Deobandi, Ahl-i-Hadith, and Barelwi Ulama. At the moment the impulse for a critical questioning of the Isnad paradigm is lacking among the traditional Ulama of these established Muslim groups. The contributions of individual Ulama, as described in the preceding paragraphs, are an exception.

The discursive space allowing for the revision of respective status' and roles of the Prophet, Hadith, Quran and various sources of authority from the past, has been constructed and enlarged upon by exegetical writings, revisionist historical narratives and polemical disputations contributed by the Ahl al-Qur'an, but its wider dissemination is premised on the Ulama who are the critics of Tradition. It is because such Ulama are perceived as acquainted with the Islamic knowledge system and operating largely within its traditional framework. Also they neither insult the general Muslims' emotional affinity with the figure of the Prophet, nor propound ideas wholly alien to a common believers' religious worldview. In fact in their critiques of Hadith, they do not aim to undermine the role of the Prophet or to question the relevance of Hadith literature but only to

challenge the authenticity of some of its portions—much in the spirit of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's works—which they consider as damaging to the reputation of the Prophet and the religion he preached.

With the further enlargement of the discursive space of the Ahl al-Qur'an and dissemination of critiques of traditional Ulama about the Isnad paradigm, it is expected that those affected with modern sensibilities—irrespective of their educational background and professional status—will find these ideas increasingly appealing. Also, as some recent trends suggest, a modernistic interpretation of Islam disregarding the Isnad paradigm is again being utilized by the power elites as a mandate for its own role in amending Islamic law. In what ways is this trend an inspiration from the Islamic modernism of the early decades of Pakistan's history is a question of specialized research. The most pronounced manifestation of this trend can be seen in the Women Protection Bill passed by the Pakistani parliament in 2006 to make amendments in the Hudood Ordinance of 1979.<sup>31</sup> The law was amended in the name of following the 'true spirit' of Islam by opting for an interpretation of Islamic injunctions regarding various sexual malpractices that disregarded the recommendations offered by the Ulama.<sup>32</sup>

Despite all these developments, it seems improbable that the numerical strength of those believing in the ideas espoused by the Ahl al-Qur'an or the critics of tradition would even remotely come close to that of the Deobandis, Ahl-i-Hadith and the Barelwis in the foreseeable future. However, the significance of these ideas within the larger intellectual tradition and debate on the discourse of Islamic reform will not be dwarfed by the inferiority of the numbers of its adherents. Or, in other words, those consciously identifying themselves as Ahl al-Qur'an may not register a meteoric rise in numbers but the reformist discourse informing disparate currents in Ahl al-Qur'an movements will gain even wider recognition.

## NOTES

1. So far four volumes of Quranic exegesis have been published by Balagh-ul-Qur'an. For the rest of the Quranic chapters, the 'Quranic board' continues to submit their findings in the monthly journal of the organization. The scholars and other members associated with Balagh-ul-Qur'an are not madrasa trained and mostly belong to professional classes who have acquired knowledge of Arabic and Islamic sciences later in their careers. One example is that of Muhammad Tufayl Shad who graduated from a university in Germany and now works as an engineer for a local industry. He is the one responsible for actively looking after the administrative affairs of the journal and the organization.



2. Another journal espousing ideas closer to that of *Tulu-i-Islam* and *Balagh-ul-Qur'an* started its publication from Karachi a decade ago. *Saur-ul-Haq* is in publication since then. It also occasionally published pamphlets about various aspects of Hadith studies. The journal mostly relies on the contributions of Azhar 'Abbas who had been actively involved in the various Ahl al-Qur'an groups during his stay in Punjab. His main contribution has been in the compilation of a self-learning textbook for the understanding of Quran. It explains various aspects of Quranic Arabic in a simple, comprehensible way so that an individual can, on his own, approach the Quranic text without the intermediary of a third person's exegetical guidance. The book was published with the financial and academic help offered by the Balagh-ul-Qur'an. Cf. Khwaja Azhar 'Abbas, *Qur'an Fehmi ke Qur'ani Usul (Jinhen Pesh-i-Nazar Rakht kar Ap Khud Tafsir-i-Qur'an kar sakte hain)* (Lahore, 2002).
3. It publishes a journal titled *Qur'ani Ma'ashra* which is edited by Muhammad Qasim Nuri. Cf. Zafar, *'Ulum-ul-Hadith*, 835.
4. The group was started in the early 1980s by a 'break-away faction' of *Tulu-i-Islam*. Some of Ghulam Ahmad Parwez's financiers patronized this group which hired the services of Qazi Kifayat Ullah to run its journal for a few years. After Qazi Kifayat Ullah quit this job, he was replaced by Muhammad 'Ali Fariq. The group was not a success and could only manage to publish a few tracts. Interview with Qazi Kifayat Ullah, January 2008, Lahore.
5. Like other groups mentioned in the list, Anjuman Irtaja'-i-Ummat is also unknown to the circle of religious scholars. Its 'proprietor' 'Ali Hasan Muzaffar is a retired principal from a Government College and has penned several monographs on the 'decay and decline of the Muslim world' and has attributed this state of condition to deviance from Quran and reliance on non-Quranic sources. As there are among non-Ulama, technocrats and professional classes a growing number of 'deniers of Hadith', the same stock offers a support base for 'proponents of Hadith' as well. Al-Balagh Foundation of Lahore is one such example. It publishes brief, non-specialized literature in defence of Hadith literature with a targeted audience of college educated professionals. It also offers short courses for this purpose. One can simply send a 'Short Messaging Service' (which, in popular parlance, is referred to as 'sms') or a letter to request a copy of the literature produced by this Foundation.
6. The organization is slightly better off than the rest mentioned in the list. It is patronized by Mufti Tahir Makki. Recently the organization has published a number of pamphlets in condemnation of Hadith literature written by a scholar named Azhar Azhari.
7. An interesting example in this regard is that of an individual writer 'Aziz Ullah Bhoyo from a remote area of Sindh. According to 'Aziz Ullah Bhoyo, the Quranic injunction for Salat is a call for the establishment of a just socio-economic order. In this understanding of the concept of Salat, a *Namazi* or worshipper is actually a 'comrade' who works tirelessly to bring this socio-economic order into existence. Bhoya, *Salat aur Namaz men Farq* (Naushehro Firoz, n.d.), 9. The timings of Salat refer to the office timings which, in the modern world, can be better understood as various 'shifts' in which work should be carried out in offices and factories. Bhoya, *Salat ke wo Mu'na jo Qur'an ne Bataye* (Naushehro Firoz, n.d.), 125. This implies that mosques are not meant to serve as central secretariats, house of justice and legislative councils for the effective administration of the order of Salat. Bhoya, *Masjiden Qur'an ki Nazar men* (Naushehro Firoz, n.d.), 13.
8. Shahab, *Ahkam-i-Qur'an men Tehrif*. There were other 'MA Arabic scholars' at the service of Parwez as well whose job was to find useful references from Arabic works in order to facilitate Parwez's own research. His former aide and once an admirer, Qazi



Kifayat Ullah reports that Parwez's skills in the Arabic language were least impressive and he could not even recite a verse of Quran properly. It was to cover up this serious flaw in his scholarship that Parwez had to hire the services of young scholars with knowledge of Arabic language. Interview with Qazi Kifayat Ullah, January 2008, Lahore.

9. The most ardent upholder of the 'Quranic Socio-Economic Order and Justice' in recent times has been Multan based Ahl al-Qur'an scholar Rehmat Ullah Tariq. He professed to be adopting a Spanish Muslim scholar Ibn Hazm's approach on these issues which, according to Tariq, precedes that of Lenin by many centuries. Although Rehmat Ullah Tariq did not belong to Ghulam Ahmad Parwez's group and was inspired mostly by the figure of Inayat Ullah Khan Mashriqi, he, nevertheless, held Parwez in high esteem. Tariq's magnum opus is *Munsukh-ul-Qur'an* in which he has made an extensive survey of hundreds of those Quranic verses which have been considered as abrogated by Ulama at different time periods and for various reasons. He has shown an impressive scholarly expertise and knowledge of classical exegetical and theological literature in rebutting the claims of abrogation in Quran.
10. Shahab's *Ahkam-ul-Furqan* (Lahore, 1999) is a comprehensive work in which Quranic injunctions relating to various jurisprudential issues and ethical-moral concerns have been detailed under the head of numerous categories.
11. The association of 'Umar Ahmad 'Usmani with the Ahl al-Qur'an was a source of 'embarrassment' for the Deobandis. After the death of his father, 'Umar Ahmad 'Usmani published the will of his late father in which the latter had assigned wealth and property to his wives and children not in accordance with the Islamic law of succession but on the basis of his own will. Cf. 'Usmani, *Fiqh al-Qur'an* (Karachi, 1986), VII, 25.
12. 'Usmani, *Fiqh al-Qur'an* (Karachi, 1980), I, 38–9. It is surprising to note that despite his upbringing and education in an extremely conservative and conformist religious environment, 'Usmani was not only able to overcome inhibitions of free thought but also adopted a progressive outlook on various sensitive issues, especially that of women rights. Volume III of *Fiqh al-Qur'an* is devoted exclusively to the treatment of Women Rights in Islam in which 'Usmani has described the women as equal partners with men in all the different spheres of life and refuses to accept the 'lordship' of men over women. This is quite significant considering that his critics among the Ulama were still clinging to notions of women inferiority on the basis of the 'scientific fact' that female brain is smaller in size than that of the male one! This, and many other 'arguments', were stated by Muhammad Din Qasmi in his book against the third volume of 'Usmani's *Fiqh al-Quran*. Cf. Qasmi, *Qur'an aur Aurat* (Lahore, 2007), 449.
13. *Tulu'-i-Islam* (Lahore), February 1992, 35–6. 'Usmani revered Parwez quite emotionally. In an undated letter (written probably during the 1950s when the two of them were negotiating about matters relating to the journal), 'Usmani emphatically reiterated his resolve to serve the *Tulu'-i-Islam* and hold on to his religious views against all odds even if it meant severing all the ties with his father. 'Umar Ahmad 'Usmani to Ghulam Ahmad Parwez. (n.d.), *Ghulam Ahmad Parwez Private Papers*.
14. *Fiqh al-Qur'an*, I, 191–3 and 206. For one particular part of the prayer, i.e. *Qa'da*, 'Usmani does not find an evidence from any Quranic verse and hence does not consider it as an obligatory part of Salat. Ibid., 209.
15. Mehmod Ahmad 'Abbasi's *Khilafat-i-Mu'awiya wa Yazid* and Maududi's *Khilafat wa Mulukiyyat* are the most important works to appear during that period on the Sunni-Shi'a polemic but both evoke arguments that are diametrically opposed to each other. While 'Abbasi's work is an appreciation of the controversial figures of Muslim history

like Mu'awiya and Yazid and hence are extremely offensive to Shi'a faith, Maududi's findings seem to support Shi'a condemnation of some of the Prophet's Companions for their misdoings. What makes these works less relevant for the present study is that both are primarily concerned with the treatment of historical records available and not with the rejection or acceptance of certain portions of Hadith literature as such.

16. One such tradition says that whosoever would lead the first invasion to Constantinople would go to Paradise. It is believed by some anti-Shi'a scholars that Yazid was the one who commanded the first invasion and that Husayn accompanied him as his subordinate during the campaign. The veracity of the tradition and the historical evidence supporting Yazid's participation in the invasion of Constantinople is generally considered to be doubtful.
17. *Hayat-i-Sayyidna Yazid* (Karachi, 1979), 5–8. In a separate writing Tamanna 'Imadi expressed similar respect for Yazid by affixing 'Hazrat' to his name—a 'title' which is meant to show respect for a person as a blessed or respectful one. He also held the opinion that Husayn had committed a grave error by revolting against the rulership of Yazid. Mahir-ul-Qadiri, *Faran* (Karachi), February 1973, 40. But as already noted in Chapter 5, Tamanna 'Imadi's criticism of pro-Shi'a Ahadith was more within the framework of traditional scholarship on Hadith and involved, mainly, a criticism of the contributions of Shahab Zuhri. In the same chapter it has been shown that Tamanna 'Imadi's approach was later followed by Amin Ahsan Islahi for the similar purpose of condemning 'Shi'a influences' in Sunni writings.
18. Tahir Makki, 'Ta'qdim' in *Gulistan-i-Hadith* (Lahore, 2005), 6–7.
19. In a separate writing by an Ahl al-Qur'an scholar Rehmat Ullah Tariq, 'Ali's contributions have been ignored by not including his name in the list of Muslim exegetes of Quran. Tariq has included in that list 'Ali's bitter political rival Mu'awiya but does not mention 'Ali who is generally considered by the Muslims as the most learned of all the Prophet's Companions. Instead of acknowledging his scholarly credentials, 'Ali has been condemned by Rehmat Ullah Tariq for nominating his own son as a successor caliph in a clear contravention of the egalitarian spirit upheld by Islam. Tariq has also discreetly accused 'Ali of complicity in the murder of Caliph 'Usman. Tariq, *Danishwan-i-Qur'an* (Multan, ca. 2000), 68.
20. He refers to Hinda—the wife of Abu Sufiyan—as 'Hazrat Hinda (God be Pleased with Her)' and absolves her of the responsibility for the killing of Prophet's uncle Hamza and the mutilation of his body. Kandhalwi, Habib-ur-Rahman, *Religious Tales: Facts and Fiction* (Karachi, 1995), 151. Kandhalwi is also critical of those Ahadith which exaggerate the virtues of Companions like Abu Bakr and 'Umar. But the focus of his extensive critique on Hadith collections is the *Ahl al-Bayt* or Prophet's family. Due to such provocations, this book remains banned in Pakistan.
21. Dr Azhar Azhari, *Zuhur-i-Mehdi: Qur'ani Talimat aur Uswa-i-Rusul ki Roshni men* (Karachi, n.d.), 39–40. Historians like Tabari are condemned for their bias as they have reported that 'Usman's son 'Abdullah bin 'Usman from Prophet's daughter Umm-i-Kulsum died at the age of 7. According to Mufti Tahir Makki it was a typing error in which 70 was replaced with 7. Interview with Mufti Tahir Makki, November 2007, Karachi.
22. The works of Mehmud Ahmad 'Abbasi and Habib-ur-Rahman Kandhalwi have been severely criticized in many of the Deobandi journals. Also, an Ahl-i-Hadith scholar has penned a whole monograph in its rebuttal. Irshad-ul-Haq Asari, *Parwezi Tashkik ka Ilmi Mahasaba* (Faisalabad, 2007). A related endeavour is to rebut the allegations against Shahab Zuhri. Cf. Hafiz Muhammad Quyyum, 'Abdul. *Imam Ibn-i-Shahab Zuhri aur un par Ai'trazat ka Tebqiqi Ja'iza* (Lahore, 2006).

23. The list of such references is exhaustive. The more 'representative' among these recent writings from the Deobandi side are, Anwar-i-Khurshid, *Ghayr Muqallidin Imam Bukhari ki 'Adalat men: Ek Tehqiq, Ek Ja'iza* (Lahore, 2006); 'Anwar-i-Khurshid, *Hadith aur Ahl-i-Hadith: Ek Tehqiq, Ek Ja'iza* (Lahore, 2006). Habib Ullah Derawi is one of the most active Deobandi polemicist writing on various aspects of Ahl-i-Hadith doctrines. A number of Barelwi writings against the Ahl-i-Hadith, too, have been in circulation for many decades. For a compendium of such writings, cf. Muhammad Na'im Ullah Khan Qadiri, ed. *Ghayr Muqallidin ka 'Ilmi Mahasaba* (Lahore, 2005). The Ahl-i-Hadith, on their part, have carried out an exhaustive scrutiny of Deoband's leading Hadith scholar Anwar Shah Kashmiri and his commentary of *Bukhari*. Cf. Muhammad Ra'is Nadawi, *Al-Lamhat ila ma fi Anwar al-Bari min al-Zalmat* (Sheikhupura, 1983). The second volume of Muhammad Muqtada Asari, *Tazkira-tul-Manazirin* (Me'o, 2004), provides details of the religious polemics that have taken place in the post-1947 period between the Ahl-i-Hadith and the rest on various issues of Hadith and Fiqh.
24. For one such collection of 'weak Ahadith in Urdu', cf. Nasir al-Din Albani, *Ahadith-i-Za'ifa ka Majmu'a*, trans. Maulana Muhammad Sadiq Khalil (Lahore, ca. 2004), 3 Vols.
25. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/regional/story/2008/02/080227\\_turkey\\_islam\\_fz.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/regional/story/2008/02/080227_turkey_islam_fz.shtml). Accessed on 5 May 2008, 19:06. A few decades earlier Dr 'Abdul Latif of Hyderabad Deccan established a Council of Islamic Studies and floated the idea of compiling a manual of authentic Ahadith to which all could agree upon. Cf. *Afkar-i-Islami ki Tashkil-i-Jadid* (Hyderabad Deccan, 1954). One of the research projects undertaken by Javed Ahmad Ghamidi's Al-Mawrid Institute includes 're-compilation' of Hadith literature and respond to those aspects of its teachings which are considered objectionable. [http://www.al-mawrid.org/pages/about\\_us.php](http://www.al-mawrid.org/pages/about_us.php). Accessed on 6 May 2008, 9:44.
26. <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2007/05/21/34683.html#002>. Accessed 24 April 2008, 10:17.  
The Ulama generally adopt an awkward indifference to the 'objectionable' portions of this tradition. In their commentaries Ulama simply state that the Hadith cites a special case and is not generally applicable. Also, they refer to their respective Fiqh authorities to specify the conditions that lead to a filial relationship between two persons. In a query that I sent to one of Pakistan's most important Deoband seminary, Jami'a Banoriya Karachi, with regard to this Hadith, the 'E-farwa' department limited its response to saying that according to Hanafi Fiqh a filial relationship can be established in the first two and a half years of a child's nursing period and not beyond that. [www.onlinefarwa.com](http://www.onlinefarwa.com), Farwa Number 35939, issued on 28 July 2007, Karachi.
27. For similar trends elsewhere in the Muslim world, especially Egypt, cf. Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, Chapter VI and VII. A group of such Egyptian scholars is based in USA and they also call themselves as Ahl al-Quran. For details, cf. <http://ahl-alquran.com/arabic/main.php>, accessed 30 July, 15:40. Also, for other modern day critics of Hadith like Rashid Kalifa (Egyptian settled in USA), Kassim Ahmed (Malaysia), and Edip Yuksel (Turkey), cf. Aisha Y. Musa, *Hadith as Scripture: Discussions on the Authority of Prophetic Traditions in Islam* (New York, 2008), chapter IV. In her work, Aisha Y. Musa has mentioned the persecution suffered by the 'Ahl al-Qur'an', especially in Egypt. While few of them have been arrested and even sentenced to up to three years in prison, this issue has evaded interest in circles of Western academy on Islam.

28. Shabbir Ahmad Azhar Mirathi, *Sahih Bukhari ka Muta'la: Bukhari ki kuch Kamzor Ahadith ki Tehqiq wa Tanqid* (Lahore, 2005), 383–4.
29. Muhammad Khalid Masud, 'Rethinking *shari'a*: Javed Ahmad Ghamidi on *hudud*', *Die Welt Des Islams* 47, 3–4 (November 2007): 356.
30. Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, *Usul wa Mubada* (Lahore, 2006), 10. Arabs were already familiar with the concept of Hajj and Salat so the Prophet's role was limited to reforming the broad aspects of these practices and bring them closer to the 'original' Abrahamic model. *Ibid.*, 56. As for the Hadith literature, the policy statement of Javed Ahmad Ghamidi's Al-Mawrid Institute states: 'The entire corpus of Hadith literature has been isolated and severed from its roots in the Quran and the Sunnat, and the real stress is now laid on the indoctrination of the principles and tenets of a particular sect and on proving its superiority over the others.' [http://www.al-mawrid.org/pages/about\\_us.php](http://www.al-mawrid.org/pages/about_us.php). Accessed on 6 May, 9:47.
31. The Hudood Ordinance was enforced in Pakistan by the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq. It prescribed 'Islamic punishments' for such offences as adultery, fornication and theft, which have explicitly been described in the text of the Quran. The provisions of this Ordinance were discriminatory to women. The women rights groups and the critics of this law argued that in case a rape victim was unable to prove the charges with the testimony of 'four pious male witnesses', she was to be punished for fornication or adultery.
32. Zahid-ur-Rashidi, one of the scholars consulted for changes in the Hudood Ordinance in 2006, has explained the 'un-Islamic' provisions of the latest changes in the Hudood Ordinance. In his various writings critiquing various provisions of the amended Hudood laws published in various Urdu newspapers, Rashidi had argued that the rape victim shall be provided justice under the criminal law in case the condition of 'four pious male witnesses' for punishment required under the Hudood Law cannot be met. But the same has not been done for cases of fornication or adultery in the new Hudood Ordinance. In fact, it has been made increasingly difficult to register a case under the new Hudood Ordinance to register cases for these offences.

# Glossary

<i>Bid'at</i>	Rituals and beliefs which are considered by the 'Ulema to be later-day accretions to the 'original' body of Islamic doctrines and practices.
<i>Darayat</i>	Critical evaluation of a Hadith on the basis of its contents instead of chains of transmission, i.e. <i>isnad</i> -based criticism (for details, cf. Appendix I).
Fatwa	religio-juristic ruling on some aspect of Islamic law.
Fiqh	the 'science' of Islamic jurisprudence in the light of which Shari'at is to be derived and understood.
<i>ghayr muqallid</i>	One who does not follow any of the four formal Schools of Islamic Shar'ia, and rather draws guidance directly from the Holy Quran and Sunnat.
Hadith (pl: Ahadith)	Words and deeds transmitted on the authority of the Prophet which convey details about the actions he performed, approved, disapproved or condoned, along with his statements and sayings on various occasions in response to different situations. A complete Hadith consists of a <i>matn</i> (text) and <i>isnad</i> (information about its chain of transmitters).
Ijma	Consensus of the Muslim community or scholars of Islam on some aspect of Shari'at.
Ijtihad	Individual reasoning on a point of law or social issue on which there is no clear guidance in the Holy Quran, Hadith or Sunnat.
<i>isnad</i>	Chain of transmitters of a Hadith.
Ka'ba	'House of God' built by Abraham and Ishmael. It is located in Mecca. Muslims face the Ka'ba while offering their daily prayers and circumambulate around it while performing pilgrimage.
Madrasa	seminaries where education is imparted in the field of Islamic sciences.
<i>matn</i>	Text of a Hadith.
<i>Mazahib</i> (sing: <i>mazhab</i> )	The four legal schools in Sunni Islam, i.e. Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki and Hanbali. They are named after their respective founding figures.
<i>Mazhab</i>	see <i>Mazahib</i>
Muhaddith	Scholar of Hadith.
(Pl: Muhaddithun)	

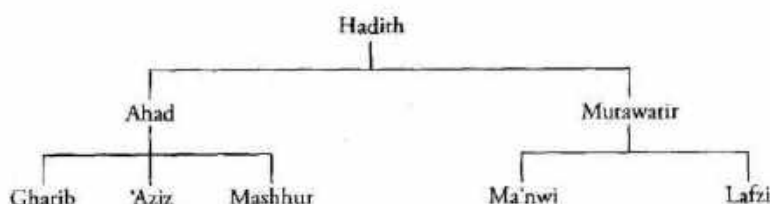
Mujtahid	learned enquirers who have the scholarly credentials to carry out Ijtihad.
Munkirin-i-Hadith (sing: Munkir-i-Hadith)	Those who deny, question or seek revision, to varying degrees of extremity, of the authority, authenticity and relevance of the Hadith literature as a source of guidance for Muslim beliefs and practices.
Muqallid	One who follows the principles of Shari'at laid down by any of the four established Schools of Sunni Islam. This concept of adhering strictly to a particular School is referred to as <i>taqlid</i> .
Namaz	a Persian loan-word for <i>Salat</i> —ritual act of worship required to be performed by Muslims five times a day.
Naskh	A term used in literature on Quranic exegesis which means 'abrogation' [of Quranic verses]. According to Quranic scholars, in some cases the abrogated verses ( <i>mansukh</i> ) were replaced by another verse ( <i>nasikh</i> ) while in other cases no replacements were made.
Pir	spiritual guide.
Qazi	Judges appointed in the courts to administer justice on the basis of Shari'at.
Rak'at	A unit in the canonized prayer denoting the order for the performance of various postures and recitation of salutations and supplications. Each of the five daily prayers have different number of <i>rak'ats</i> to be performed.
Sihah Satta	Six collections of Ahadith considered as the most 'authentic' by Sunni scholars of Islam (For details, cf. Appendix I).
Sirat	Literature dealing with the biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
Shari'at	The body of rules guiding the Muslims in every aspect of life including law, ethics, and etiquette. Its four major sources include the Quran, Hadith, Ijma (consensus of the community) and Qiyas (analogical reasoning).
Sunnat	Normative mode of action associated with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which is considered as exemplary and binding for the Muslims to follow. Hadith refers to the statements of the Prophet and the Sunnat refers to the actions that he performed.
Sunnat-i-Murwatir	Traditions or Sunnat of the Prophet (especially those associated with the performance of Namaz) that have been followed in practice for centuries by such a large



	segment of the Muslim population that they cannot qualify to be unauthentic. This concept is used by some of the scholars to deny the utility of Hadith as the source of Muslim practices for various acts of worship.
Tafsir	Commentary or exegesis of Quran.
<i>Taglid</i>	See Muqallid
Tariqat	Mystic path
Ulama (sing: 'Alim)	Scholars learned in Islamic legal and religious studies. The title attached to their names is mostly that of Maulana or Maulwi.
'Urs	Commemorating death anniversary of a Sufi signifying his communion with God.
Wahi	Divine revelation. Two 'types' of Wahi are generally referred to: <i>wahi matlu</i> is the recorded revelation in the form of Quran and is recited during the prayers; <i>wahi ghayr matlu</i> or 'un-recited revelation' comprises of Hadith and Sunnat.

## Appendix I: Categories of Hadith

**Figure I (a) Categories of Hadith on the basis of the number of its transmitters**



### **1. *MUTWATIR* (CONSECUTIVE)**

A hadith that has been reported by such a large number of reporters at every level of transmission that it excludes the possibility of forgery or falsehood. There are disagreements between the traditionists on fixing the minimum number of reporters required for a Hadith to be termed as *mutawatir*. The numbers vary from 5, 12 and 20 to even 313—each number being justified by a Quranic verse or on the basis of some religious account. One of the best known of *mutawatir* Hadith is reported by seventy-two Companions and quotes the Prophet as saying that whosoever attributes a false statement to him, makes his abode in Hell.

#### **(i) *Lafzi* (verbatim transmission)**

A Hadith which is reported in exactly the same words as Prophet had uttered them. Only a handful of traditions qualify the criteria of being widely reported and sharing the same text. Quran—although entirely different as a scripture from Hadith collection—in a way, presents an example of verbatim transmission. It was recited by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to his Companions and transmitted by innumerable reporters—both at the level of Companions and Followers—over a long period of time, in exactly the same words.

#### **(ii) *Ma'nwi* (continous transmission of the meaning alone)**

It does not convey the Hadith in exactly the same words but only the *sense* of what had been said or done by the Prophet. Since this type of Hadith, too, is widely reported, its Isnad is not questioned but its relevance in determining legal and religious commandments is open to debate.

**2. AHAD (SINGLE)**

It simply refers to a Hadith which is not reported by enough number of transmitters to reach the level of *mutawatir*. Opinions differ with regard to usage and utility of *ahad* traditions as valid sources for law and practice. Caliph 'Umar usually asked for two witnesses before accepting an *ahad* tradition. Imam Shaf'i—followed by Ahmad bin Hanbal—was the first to assert its authority as valid for the purposes of law making and determining the practice of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Abu Hanifa finds it only conjecturally useful and accepts it sparingly. Malik preferred *Qiyas* over *ahad* traditions not backed by the practices of the Companions and the Followers.

**(i) Mashhur (famous)**

It is reported by three to four narrators at every level of its transmission but falls short of fulfilling the criteria for *mutawatir*.

**(ii) 'Aziz (rare)**

A tradition whose narrators are not less than two at every level of transmission. Their number may exceed at particular level(s) but at no level should they be less than two.

**(iii) Gharib (strange)**

A Hadith that has been narrated by a single reporter at any one or all levels of transmission. Even if at any level of transmission the number of reporters exceed by one, the tradition remains *gharib*.

## Appendix II: Sihah Satta (Six Authentic Collections of Ahadith)<sup>1</sup>

### **The *Sahih* of Bukhari**

Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Bukhari (d. 870) started his Hadith lessons at the age of eleven. What prompted him to undertake the task of compiling an authentic version of Prophet's sayings was a vision he had in which he was flying flies away from the Prophet.

He is reported to have learned Hadith from more than a thousand scholars. For this purpose, he travelled extensively to Balkh, Samarkand, Nishapur, Baghdad, Basra, Kufa, Mecca, Medina, Asqalan, Damascus and Egypt. His *wanderjahren* continued for some four decades.

The *Sahih* was compiled by him over a period of sixteen years during which he sifted through 600,000 traditions. He has stated that he has composed his work thrice. In addition to the traditionally-held criteria for ascertaining the soundness of a tradition, Bukhari also emphasized the point that there should be ample evidence to show the narrator had had the opportunity of personally meeting his predecessor from whom he is relaying the tradition. The whole book was compiled in the Holy Mosque of Medina and during the process Imam Bukhari would offer prayers and perform *Istikhara* (invoke Divine guidance) for ascertaining the soundness of the traditions.

The number of Ahadith in his collection, excluding those without complete *isnad*, are 7397 of which about 4000 are repetitions. His purpose in repeating Ahadith and placing them under different chapters, is to bring to light further evidence of the authenticity of Hadith in question and to draw more than one practical conclusion from them.

Al-Daraqutni (d. 995) has attempted to prove the weakness of some 200 traditions to be found in *Sahih* Bukhari. Reservations are also displayed over some 80 narrators that have found place in the traditions compiled by him. The criticism shows that these traditions may not be wholly incorrect but are not in strict conformity with the criteria laid down by Bukhari.

### **The *Sahih* of Muslim**

Muslim bin al-Hajjaj's (d. 875) collection of Ahadith was compiled from 300,000 traditions over a period of almost fifteen years. It is relatively easier to make use

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the information for this section has been taken—among other works—from A.F.L. Beeston, T.M. Johnstone, R.B. Serjeant, and G.R. Smith (eds.), *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period* (Cambridge, 1983).

of Muslim because the compiler has brought one particular Hadith under a single category alone, along with all the different chains of transmission by which it has been reported. He takes pain to mention any change in text or disagreement about the quality of any narrator in its chain, even if such difference is slight and does not have a noticeable bearing on the overall meaning and relevance of that Hadith.

It contains some 12,000 Ahadith including 4000 repetitions. Muslim and Bukhari are collectively referred to as *al-Shaykhayn*, that is two leading authorities, on Hadith. The number of traditions that are common to both Bukhari and Muslim number 2326 and are considered to be worthy of most respect.

#### **The Sunan of Nasa'i**

Nasa'i's (d. 915) work contains over 5000 traditions which are divided into sub-chapters and arranged in the familiar legal order. He is generally placed next to Bukhari and Muslim in the hierarchy of authentic Hadith works for his strict rules regarding the acceptance of Hadith.

Like other Hadith scholars, Nasa'i undertook journeys or *rihlah* to learn Ahadith of the Prophet. He started travelling for this purpose from the young age of fifteen and went to Khurasan, Iraq, Arabia, Syria and Egypt among other places.

#### **The Sunan of Abu Da'ud**

Among *Sihaḥ Satta*, Abu Da'ud's (d. 888) collection has the maximum number of traditions dealing with Fiqh. He has selected 4800 traditions from 500,000 traditions known to him. Though it contains many weak Ahadith as well but then, in those cases, their quality is indicated by the author himself.

#### **The Jami of Tirmizi**

Tirmizi (d. 892) was a student of Imams Bukhari and Muslim, along with some other reputed scholars of Hadith sciences. The quality of the training he received is reflected in his work as well. His collection is properly arranged and no traditions are repeated. He takes note of the opinion of the jurists as well which serves to further the importance of his work for juristic readings as the bulk of its traditions dealing with legal, dogmatic and historical aspects, have generally been accepted by the jurists of the main juridical tendencies as the basis of the Islamic law. Moreover, Tirmizi significantly contributed to *rijaḥ* sciences by discussing the relative status of the narrators in the form of analytical remarks on the degree of authenticity of a Hadith.

#### **The Sunan of Ibn Maja**

Ibn Maja's (d. 886) work was included among *Sihaḥ Satta* in the fifth century by Muhammad bin Tahir al-Maqdasi because it contains many such traditions that are not to be found in any other book of *Sahab*. It has, however, a lower status

than the rest because there are to be found in this collection weak traditions, along with *sahih* and *hasan* ones. There is disagreement among the scholars on the number of *muz'u* traditions in this collection. Ibn Jawzi puts the total at thirty-four.

In all, this work contains 4341 Ahadith of which 3002 exist in other five collections as well and for the rest the general rule is not to accept these traditions without proper scrutiny.

## NOTES

1. There are hundreds of different types of Hadith sciences with each of its branch a separate science in itself. The appendix offers only basic information about preliminary aspects of Hadith sciences, relevant to the present study. Sources: Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features* (Lahore, 2001); Dr Suhayl Hasan, *Mu'jam Istilahat-i-Hadith* (Islamabad, 2003).



### Appendix III: Images

لبسکم الرحمن الرحیم  
 از فقیر الخیر عبد الرحمن بطرف جبین فی الدعا خیر فی دین الخیر  
 مولوی اللہ یار خان السلام علیکم وعلیٰ آئینہ الدوبلاۃ الیہود  
 خطوط آپکی سبب پوچھ چکی ہیں بسیدیل محاکر حیدر خطوط  
 اور وخط دستی مگر جواب سائل سسوا آپکی سبب معنی و اجازت  
 کامل تو بیاعت مرخصنا سو و غیر فرصت باطلہ ان قلب میں کل الوجود  
 حدیث خواہ دستیات ہوئی تھی لیت و لعل میں لیل و نہا یا لیت  
 گذری تھی براہ ہمارا فی یہ قصور قابل عذر معتبر لیا و لعل لیت  
 معاف فرما تا ملک تیار کیا کیے دین مورد افسوس و عتاب نہاد  
 و ملا زونا ناموا من و الیٰ صیحاتین العیظ و الیٰ صیحاتین العیظ  
 واللہ عجب المحسنین کی تعیل و امتثال کرنا معنی ہا معنی - صاحب حیدر  
 معنی و تعیل لفظ اللہ - بلنا نہ لامیر - فکرنا قصور قاصر میں یہ نظر آتا  
 ہے کہ اللہ کام معنی جو مشہور و معروف عوام الناس میں مروج ہے کہ  
 من شمس مستعل سوچا ہے - خلاف تحقیق و تدقیق و تقاض  
 راہ اول الکتاب یزنین راشدین ہمدین کہ معنی لکھنا تو خاص

Image III (a). Maulwi 'Abdullah Chakralawi's letter to Maulwi Allah Yar Khan, 24 Rajab 1303 AH (29 April 1886). (Courtesy: Muhammad Rafiq Asari)



Image III (b). Waqfnama (March 1905)  
in favour of Anjuman Ahl al-Qur'an  
Lahore to serve as the custodian of  
Chiniyan Wali mosque.  
(Courtesy: Dr Sakhiya Sakha Ullah)



Image III (c). Khwaja Ahmad-ud-Din  
Amritsari (1861–1936)  
(Courtesy: Dr Sakhia Sakha Ullah)





Image III (c). Title page of *Balagh* (Amritsar) and membership form of Ummat-i-Muslima



Image III (f). Ghazi Mehmud  
Dharampal (d. 1960)  
(Courtesy: Arshad Chaudhry,  
Faisalabad)



Image III (g). Aslam Jayrajpuri  
(1881–1955) (Courtesy: Idara  
Tulu'-i-Islam)



Image III (h). Ghulam Ahmad  
Parwez (1903–1985)  
(Courtesy: Idara Tulu'-i-Islam)





Image III (i). The Ahl al-Qur'an mosque, Siriyan Wala Bazar, Lahore (March 2006). (Photograph by author)

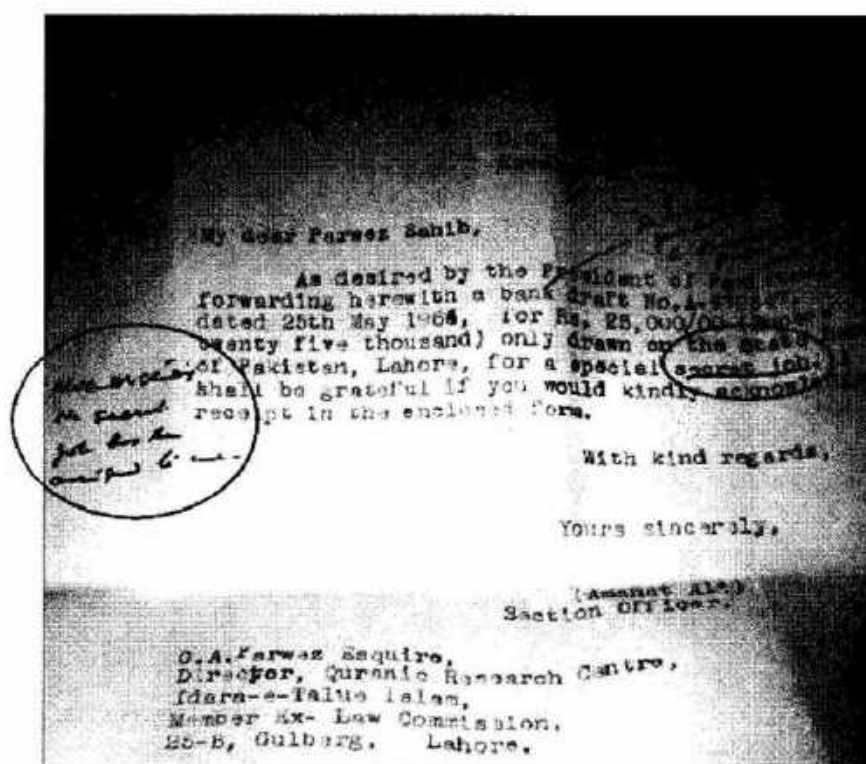


Image III (j). Letter from the Presidency to Ghulam Ahmad Parwez indicating financial support worth Rs 25,000 for some 'Secret Mission'. On the margins of the letter Parwez wrote a comment that no 'Secret Mission' had been assigned to him by Ayub Khan (May 1964). (Source: Ghulam Ahmad Parwez Private Papers, Idara Tulu'-i-Islam)



Image III (k). 'The Fundamental Conflict'  
Project, 1967 (Source: Ghulam Ahmad Parwez  
Private Papers, Idara Tulu'-i-Islam)

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*Faran* (Karachi)

*Fayz-ul-Islam* (Rawalpindi)

*Fikr wa Nazar* (Islamabad)

*Hanif* (Ludhiana)

*Isha'at-us-Sunna* (Lahore)

*Isha'at-ul-Qur'an* (Lahore)

*Ishraq* (Lahore)

*Jami'a* (Delhi)

*Jarida* (Karachi)

*Ma'arif* (Azamgarh)

*Muhaddith* (Lahore)

*Nuqush* (Lahore)

*Rahiq* (Lahore)

*Sahifa Ahl-i-Hadith* (Karachi)

*Saqafat* (Lahore)

*Shams-ul-Islam* (Bhara)  
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